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Walter C. Baylies





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SOLOMON APPOINTED KING.—P. 171.

THE
S O V E R E I G N S
OF
THE BIBLE.

BY ELIZA R. STEELE,

Author of "Heroines of Sacred History," "Summer Journey to the West," etc.

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"We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king."  
1 SAM. xii. 19.  
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MY REVERED PASTOR,

REV. I. S. SPENCER, D.D.,

THIS VOLUME IS, BY PERMISSION,

Respectfully Dedicated.

Preface.

THESE memoirs are collected from the books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and the prophets. They are sent forth with a hope that the story of a race, so favored of God, and so rebellious, may be fraught with interest and instruction to all who read it.

“If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is all I could attain to.”—2 MACCABEES, XV

ELIZA R. STEELE.

Brooklyn, October, 1851.

CHAPTER II

The first of the two main branches of the subject is the study of the history of the human mind. This branch is divided into two main parts, the history of the human mind in general, and the history of the human mind in particular. The history of the human mind in general is the study of the development of the human mind from its earliest stages to the present. The history of the human mind in particular is the study of the development of the human mind in a particular country or period. The second of the two main branches of the subject is the study of the philosophy of the human mind. This branch is divided into two main parts, the philosophy of the human mind in general, and the philosophy of the human mind in particular. The philosophy of the human mind in general is the study of the nature and scope of the human mind. The philosophy of the human mind in particular is the study of the nature and scope of the human mind in a particular country or period.

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Sovereigns of the Bible.

INTRODUCTION.

THE promises of God were fulfilled. With an outstretched hand, and with wondrous miracles, he had led his suffering people forth from the oppressor's power, and placed them in a pleasant and fertile land. Lofty mountains and verdant plains diversified the scene, while everywhere in abundance were gathered honey, wine, and oil. "Butter of kine, milk of goats, fat of rams—rams of the breed of Bashan—fat of kidney of wheat, and pure blood of the grape," were in lavish profusion around them. Their enemies were driven away, and they lived under the gentle sway of their judges and prophets, and of their powerful God. Still they were neither contented, grateful, nor happy. The barbaric pomp

of the surrounding nations dazzled their eyes; they contrasted it with their own republican plainness, and the "pride of life" was awakened. "Earthly and sensual" as they had become, they no longer saw Him who was invisible, nor the glorious Ruler and court above, but desired an earthly king to rule over them. A deputation of the people sought Samuel, and demanded a king. Then the heart of Samuel sank within him; for all the corruption of a court, and all the evils which a monarchy would bring upon his countrymen, came before his prophetic spirit, and he grieved at their request. His own rejection, also, as their ruler, smote upon his heart, and, turning from his ungrateful people, he sought the sanctuary, where, low before his God, he poured out his sorrow and asked for counsel. The Lord spoke comfortably to his aged servant, and bade him not to grieve, saying:—

"They have not rejected thee; they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

The Lord also reminded Samuel of their ungrateful conduct since the day they were brought out of Egypt, in forsaking Him for other gods.

telling him, "As they have done to me, so they will they do to thee."

The prophet was then charged to "protest solemnly" against the people's rash request; to point out all the evils of a monarchy; and then, if they still persisted, a king should be given them. Samuel returned to the door of the tabernacle, and addressed the assembled people. He repeated the words he had heard in the holy place, and then described the evils of a monarchical government. He told them they were choosing a master who would use them but as his servants. "He will take your sons to run before his chariots," said the prophet, "and to make music for him, and till his lands. He will make your daughters his cooks and handmaids; while of your sheep and your fields he will take a tenth. Ye will cry out, then, to the Lord to save you, and he will not hear."

To all this the people still cried out: "Nay, but we will have a king to reign over us, that we may be like other nations!"

Again the humbled prophet returned to the tabernacle for counsel. He was bid to hearken to the people and give them their desire. Stand-

ing before them, the prophet announced the favorable reply to their petition, and then desired them to disperse to their homes and await the pleasure of the Lord.

Saul.

SAUL, the first monarch of the Hebrews, was a Benjamite. This tribe was the smallest of all, and at that time in disrepute with its brethren. He was the son of Kish, a man of considerable wealth, and of repute among his brethren. Saul was a remarkably tall man, possessed of a majestic exterior, while his talents and disposition were of the highest order. To quote the words of the inspired writer, he was "a choice young man and a goodly." As he was chosen by the Lord, he no doubt possessed those qualities which would have insured the prosperity of Israel and his own happiness, if he had followed the advice of Samuel, and obeyed his God. Samuel was told to expect the chosen king in Ramah at a certain day and hour. He remained there until the time appointed, when Saul entered the city. There was no miracle employed to bring him from his home at Gibeah to Ramah; he imagined he was following his

parent's command when his heavenly Father was leading him along the path which he willed him to take.

The white, silvery-coated ass was a valuable animal in Judea, and those who possessed them kept them with much care. A drove belonging to the father of Saul was missing, and Kish sent his son, attended by a herdsman, to seek for them. They passed through Mount Ephraim and the land of Benjamin, and arrived near Ramah, without finding them. Seeing himself so far from home, Saul proposed to return, lest his absence should alarm his father. The servant said, "Behold, there is a wise and holy man in Ramah, who perhaps may advise us how to proceed." "Our bread is out," Saul replied, "and I have no money to pay the prophet." "I have a quarter of a shekel in silver," his man rejoined, and strongly urged Saul to enter the city. As Saul stood gazing at the walls of Ramah, which crowned the summit of a hill before him, he beheld a group of maidens come out the gate and descend the hill. With one hand they held up their loose flowing robes, and with the other supported vases upon their heads. They sought,

the fountain which bubbled in the grove near the spot where stood Saul. "Is the seer Samuel in the city?" Saul asked. "He is," replied the foremost damsel, letting down her pitcher; "he arrived this morning, to preside over a feast and sacrifice which take place to-day. Make haste, and ye may meet him ere he reach the high-place."

Saul and his servant entered the city just as Samuel, with a procession of people, passed before the gate. The prophet had anxiously watched the approach of every person that day, expecting the instant arrival of the appointed King of Israel. No indications had as yet been given him of the Lord's will. At length the tall, princely form of Saul met his eye as he stood in the gateway, and the Spirit whispered him, "*Behold the man that shall rule my people!*"

As Samuel stopped to gaze upon Saul, the latter ventured to say: "Tell me, I pray thee, where is the seer's house?" "I am the seer," answered Samuel. "Go up before me to the high-place, and think not of thine asses, for they are found. On thee, young man, and on thy father's house, is all the desire of Israel!" The astonished Saul replied, "Why speakest thou

thus to me? Am I not of the smallest tribe, and the smallest family of that tribe?"

Samuel replied not, but placing Saul in an honorable post in the procession, proceeded to the high-place. When they returned, Saul was carried by Samuel into his house, where he held a feast, at which were assembled thirty of the principal men of the place. To the astonishment of all, Saul was placed in the seat of honor above them, and before him were placed the choicest dishes of the table. The feast was over, and, led by the prophet, the wondering Saul, who walked as if in a dream, followed through the court and up the stairs to the roof of the house.

The house-top was a usual resort of the people of Judea, for there might be found pure air and repose. A battlement ran around it, to protect it from the view of others. Here the eye of Saul, if he had not been so pre-occupied, might have wandered with delight over rich valleys, clothed with fields of wheat, groves of olives, and vineyards; over stately mountains, and that "great and wide sea" which lay at the west. But he saw nothing except the prophet, who

poured into his astounded ears the tale of his glorious destiny. He should be the monarch of that great country; the leader of its armies, and conqueror of its enemies! Placed on the throne, not by the will of a few, but by the High and Mighty Lord of Israel, under whose protecting arm he should fear no change!—Scarcely able to credit this account, Saul would have rejected it as false, had any other than the prophet related it. To assure him of the truth, Samuel foretold him all that would happen to him on his journey home, and every person he should meet with.

The next morning Samuel led the future king out of the city; and when they reached a retired place, poured sacred oil upon his head, kissed him, and proclaimed him King—"anointed by the Lord to be Captain over his inheritance!"

Everything happened to Saul as Samuel had foretold, and he was thus convinced of the truth of his communication. He reached his home, where, without speaking of the promises of Samuel, he related all else that occurred.

Mizpeh was one of the three cities to which it was the habit of Samuel to repair to hold meet

ings for the administration of justice, or to give religious instructions. To this city he repaired after his interview with Saul, and called an assembly of the people. When they had met together, the prophet thus addressed them:—

“Hear, now, O people, the words which I am commissioned to deliver to you from the Lord. I brought you up out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and ye have this day rejected me and my prophet as rulers over you, and seek one of yourselves as your king! I have caused all the evils resulting from such a step to be placed before you, and yet ye persist. Now, then, I will grant your request, and upon your own heads be the consequences!” Samuel then took a vase, in which were lots, from which was to be drawn the tribe and family of the king.

Eagerly gazed the tribes, as the hand of Samuel, directed by the Lord, drew forth the lots, each hoping the future monarch would be taken from among their number. To the surprise of the assembled Israelites, as if to humble their pride, the tribe of Benjamin, lowest and smallest of all, was chosen. From this tribe the lot fell upon the

family of Matri, the house of Kish, and his son Saul. To conceal his agitation, the young man had retired to a secluded spot, but was soon brought into the assembly, where, by his tall and commanding form, he was easily distinguished.

"Behold the man whom the Lord hath chosen!" said the prophet. "There is none like him among all the people!" Then the assembly shouted, and the air rang with cries of "God save the King!" "Hear now, O Hebrews," said Samuel, "the words of the Lord, as they were given to Moses. God, whom ye recognized then as your king and governor in all things, ever mindful of His people's interests, has left laws and regulations for your guidance in every situation of life. Foreseeing what hath now come to pass, He hath given you these laws for you and your king." He then read from Deuteronomy the following words, dictated by God to Moses, foreseeing their wish for a monarchy, and that they would say, "I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me." They are in such a case enjoined to choose one of their own nation, and

* Or, as in the Hebrew. "Let the King live."

not a stranger ; and with a view to prevent their incursions to the neighboring nations, the king was forbidden to keep a great troop of horses ; neither should he multiply wives, lest they turn his heart from God, nor multiply hoards of gold. These laws were to be written in a book by the king, which must be given in charge to the Levites. The king was likewise required to read the laws often ; to fear God and keep his commandments ; and above all, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren. Should these commands be obeyed, the kingdom of Israel was promised to him and his children. These laws, few and simple as they seem, comprise all that was necessary for man's happiness here and hereafter. The lusts of the flesh and the pride of life were here condemned, and man was required to fear God and walk humbly before Him. We shall see if Saul obeyed these commandments. Samuel then caused the book in which these laws were written to be given to the care of the Levites. The people departed, well pleased with their king, except a few, who thought one from their tribe, more numerous than that of Benjamin, should have been chosen. In the contempt of

their hearts they exclaimed: "How shall this man save us?" Saul heeded them not, but returned to his home, surrounded by a band of men who had devoted themselves to his service. Peace reigned over the country for some time. Saul, having no opportunity of acting as king, returned to his pastoral life, waiting the signal of the Lord to come forth and take the reins of the kingdom. The time had now arrived. Nahash, king of the neighboring tribe of Ammonites, suddenly surrounded the town of Jabesh-Gilead, which belonged to the half tribe of Manasseh, east of the Jordan, and demanded its surrender. The citizens, despairing of succor, agreed to deliver the city if they could have favorable terms. "Hear, then, my only conditions," said the bloody Ammonite: "I will thrust out your right eyes, that you may be a reproach to Israel, and a monument of my power." Dismayed at this proposal, the elders of the city requested seven days truce, that they might send for help; "and then," they said, "if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee." Nahash, foolishly confident, granted them the seven days respite. The deputation from the besieged city

caused great distress and confusion in the village of Gibeah, where the king dwelt. Saul, in great humility and patience, had awaited the time for showing himself a king indeed, and in the meanwhile occupied himself, as usual, with his pastoral pursuits. At eventide that day he followed the herd from the field as usual, and, as he entered the city, heard around him cries of distress at every hand. "What aileth the people, that they weep?" said Saul, amazed. And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. Saul heard them with indignation, while energy and strength from on high swelled his heart. Seizing a sword, he hewed in pieces his yoke of oxen, which stood beside him, and sent these bloody ensigns by the hands of messengers throughout all the land. "With these tokens of war bear with ye this message," cried the king: "Who-soever cometh not forth after Saul, and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen!" The fear of the Lord fell upon the people; they dared not disobey the commands of His anointed, but came out in numbers to join the standard of the king.

The army of Saul was assembled at Bezek.

Here he reviewed and numbered them, and found they amounted to three hundred and thirty thousand men. Thirty thousand were of the tribe of Judah, and the remainder from the other tribes of Israel. The messengers of Jabesh-Gilead were called to behold the array, and despatched back to the city with these words:—"Thus shall ye say to the men of Jabesh-Gilead—to-morrow, by that time the sun is hot, ye shall have help!" The joy of the besieged city was great when they heard this news. Heralds were immediately sent to the enemy, with a promise from the men of Jabesh to evacuate the city on the morrow, and deliver themselves up to the Ammonites. The army of Saul, divided into three bands, surrounded the Ammonites, and, falling suddenly upon them at early dawn, completely routed and slew them. The triumphant army, exulting in the prowess of their king, returned to Gibeah. "Where are the men," they exclaimed, "who were unwilling that Saul should reign over us? Bring them forth that we may put them to death!" But victory had not so intoxicated Saul as to make him forget mercy. "There shall not a man be

put to death to-day," he said. "For the Lord hath been merciful this day to us, and hath wrought the salvation of Israel." As Saul had not been solemnly anointed king, Samuel now saw a fitting time had arrived, while so many of the people were met together. He therefore bade the people follow him to Gilgal, a city one league west of the Jordan. Here was an altar which Samuel had dedicated to the Lord. Around this all the people were assembled, while the prophet and the king stood upon each side. As Samuel gazed upon the people he had so long governed, and whom he was now to leave to the guidance of another, a shadow passed over his brow and over his heart; but subduing his feelings, he said to the Israelites: "Lo, I have hearkened unto your voice, and now behold your king walketh before you! I have been your ruler, and lived among you from my childhood until this day, when I am old and gray-headed. And now, if any have aught against me, behold, here I am! Witness against me before the Lord, and before Saul his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose ass have I taken? Whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed;

or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? Speak, and I will restore it you." The elders, answering for the people, said, with emotion: "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand." "The Lord is witness against you," said Samuel; "and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand!" And they answered, "He is witness!" "Now, therefore, listen, O Israel," cried the prophet, "while I rehearse to you some of the righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and your fathers. When they cried unto the Lord, He raised up Moses and Aaron, and brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt, and placed them here. But they forgot the Lord their God, and He sold them into the hand of Sisera, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the Lord, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord and have served idols; but now deliver us, and we will serve none but thee.' The Lord sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, who at

different times delivered you out of the hands of your enemies, and you dwelled safely. And now, when ye heard Nahash, king of the children of Ammon, was coming against you, ye forgot these former deliverances which the Lord wrought through your judges, and demanded an earthly king, instead of the Lord who ruled you before! The Lord hath granted your desire, and the king ye have chosen is before you! To prove to you, my people, that I speak not my own words alone, when I reprove you for this great wickedness which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for a king, I will show you a sign from heaven. Is it not wheat-harvest to-day, when ye know it never rains? I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain, that ye may see the Lord heareth me, and approves of my rebukes to you." So Samuel called unto the Lord. The humbled people stood in awe and fear, looking from the severe prophet to the clear summer sky, which was smiling placidly down upon them. Suddenly the stillness was broken by a deafening roar of terrific thunder, while the fearful flashes of dazzling lightning outshone

the sun. Blinded and trembling, the people prostrated themselves upon the ground, crying for mercy. "O Prophet!" they cried, "pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that they die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king!" "Fear not," said the softened prophet. "If in future you and your king will serve the Lord, and not rebel against Him, then the Lord will not forsake you, for it hath pleased Him to make you His own peculiar people. The awful warning of to-day was to show you the Lord still watches over your doings. I am no longer your ruler, but I shall not cease to pray for you, as your priest and prophet. Hear now my last words:—Obey the Lord; and ye and your king shall prosper; but if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king!" The assembly then slowly dispersed.

Saul, from this time, took upon himself the state of a king. His house was filled with servants, who approached him with the lowliest reverence. A body-guard of three thousand men surrounded him wherever he moved; and

another of one thousand was formed, for his son Jonathan.

War again hovered over the land. The Philistines were making depredations upon the borders, and although they had been gallantly repulsed by Jonathan, only gave way to return in larger bands. At length they assembled before the town of Michmash in Ephraim, to the number of thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and an immense multitude on foot. Saul caused the silver trumpets of war to sound throughout the land to gather the people. Badly provided for battle, and fearing the army which had assembled, the great mass of the people fled across the Jordan, or concealed themselves in the rocks and fastnesses of the hills. Never was a monarch or a general more painfully situated than was Saul at that moment. An immense army rapidly approaching, and his craven people refusing to rally around him. Samuel had promised at the end of seven days to be with him. These days were rapidly passing, and every day some new desertions from his ranks. The seventh day was passing, and Saul found

himself with only six hundred men, almost totally unarmed. The Philistines had obtained such complete possession of the country, that they had taken away all arms, and forbidden the Israelites to resort to smith or armorer; but to bring every rural instrument to be repaired in their land. Saul and his son Jonathan were in armor and possessed weapons of war; beside them, there were but few. What was Saul to do? The Philistines were rapidly approaching,—must he stay still and be slaughtered? Ah, had the king trusted in the word of the Lord, sent through his holy prophet, who now lingered to try the faith and obedience of Saul, he would have tarried till he came to give his counsel. But proud of his once high station and power, he rashly resolved to take upon himself the priestly office and offer sacrifices, in hopes some miraculous manifestation would be granted to succor him. The sacrifice was over, and the word was brought him that Samuel approached. Saul went forth to meet him, but when he beheld the prophet arrayed in his priestly garments of purple, and scarlet, and gold embroidery; when he saw the

dazzling Urim and Thummim upon his shoulders, and looked upon his solemn countenance, he felt he had offended greatly in taking upon him the priestly office: "Saul, what hast thou done?" asked the prophet. The king rallied and sought to excuse himself. "The people were forsaking me," he said,—“the Philistines were approaching, and no one but God to rely upon, I offered a sacrifice to entreat his help.”

“Thou hast done foolishly,” said Samuel severely. “Since the days of Moses, saw ye any offering sacrifice save the priests alone? Art thou a son of Aaron, art thou even of the race of Levi, that thou takest upon thee their offices? Were they anointed, and set apart, and sanctified, by God and by Moses, that a son of Benjamin should stand before the altar and offer sacrifice? Thou art a king, Saul, but not a priest. Hadst thou obeyed the Lord’s commands, it would have better pleased him than thy ill-judged sacrifice; and he would have established thy kingdom for ever. Now that thou hast thus offended, thy kingdom shall be taken from thee and given to another!” Samuel, after delivering this mes-

sage from the Lord, went to Gibeah, where the humbled and repentant Saul followed him with his diminished army.

The two armies were encamped in sight of each other. The activity and military display which was observable among the Philistines, compared with the timidity, the gloom, which reigned in their own band, stung the soul of the son of Saul. Calling to him his armor-bearer, who was a valiant and active young man, Jonathan thus addressed him—"Come, I am tired of this inactivity; what sayest thou to a passage of arms with those uncircumcised idolators?" "Willingly, my prince; but our numbers are too small to battle yonder host." "Numbers!" cried the ardent youth, "I did but mean thee and myself, unknown to my father. We have the help of the Lord. He needs not numbers, and can conquer by few as by many." The armor-bearer caught the military ardor of young Jonathan, and exclaimed, "Do all thy heart dictates thee, I will go with thee to death!" and they two secretly withdrew from the camp.

The Philistines had sent out three bands to ravage the country, but had left a party en-

trenched upon a rocky eminence, between Gibeah and Michmash. This garrison Jonathan intended to surprise. The courageous young men reached the foot of the rocks. "We will now come from beneath the cover of the trees," said Jonathan, "and show us to the garrison. If they tell us to remain until they come down, we will refrain: but if they call us to come up, we will do so, knowing this to be the signal that the Lord is with us." Accordingly, the prince and his armor-bearer emerged from the shade, and caught the eye of the enemy on the rocks above. "Ho, ho!" they exclaimed, "Behold the Hebrews are venturing out from their holes. Perchance they know not our numbers, and we will call them up and slay them." One of them accordingly approached the summit of the precipice, and called to the young men to ascend, as he could show them something wonderful. Jonathan took this as a signal the Lord would deliver the Philistines into the snare he had laid for them; and with a stout heart clambered up the precipice, followed by his armor-bearer. Springing upon the summit, the two young heroes immediately began to attack-right and left,

with such fury that slain and wounded soon strewed the ground around them. Amazed and unprepared, the Philistines staggered back. A belief arose that the gallant chief was but leader of a band, now following him; and with cries of dismay they turned and fled. Confusion and fear infected the whole army, and they were soon flying in small numbers over the country. King Saul had in the meantime pitched his tent, beneath a brilliant pomegranate tree, where he commanded a view of the camp of the Philistines. He was now seated beneath the tree, and at his side was Abiah, a priest, clad in his white robe, crossed in front by the gay-colored Ephod, which hung down to his feet. The two were sadly discoursing, when the watchmen, who were looking at the enemy's camp, proclaimed they were attacked and were flying. Saul immediately arose and discovered the Philistines were dispersed by some unseen conqueror. "Number our people," he exclaimed, "and see who is gone from us." When the absence of Jonathan and his armor-bearer was discovered, Saul trembled for his son, and conjured the priest to bring the Ark that its presence might destroy

the enemy. He soon, however, countermanded his order, as he saw the Philistines were completely routed. He called his men to follow, and exclaimed, "Cursed be the man who this day tasteth food before I am avenged of my enemies!" and with sword in hand assisted in the pursuit. Those fearful souls who had concealed themselves now came forward, and the Philistines, attacked in all their bands, were routed from the borders of Israel.

When the enemy was defeated, the victors returned to the camp; weary and faint for hunger they had been during the day, but refrained from tasting anything, even the wild honey which they beheld in the forest, as they feared the curse of Saul. Jonathan, flushed with victory, was returning at night, followed by his armor-bearer, when he came upon a party of men who had been driving home some cattle taken from the Philistines, but who now lay with the cattle along the ground. "Why lie ye here?" cried Jonathan; "take the spoil to my father." "We are faint with hunger," said one, "and need repose ere we proceed." "Hunger," exclaimed the young prince, "see here are

trees dropping with honey," and putting the point of his spear into a hollow tree, he brought forth honey-comb and ate. "Eat; it hath much refreshed me," he said. The people, who had gazed with consternation, now sprang up, crying, "Hold thy hand, Jonathan; no one can eat food this day, for thus hath the king decreed." "My father has but added to the trouble of the people by this decree. The battle, however, is over; eat, I give you leave."

Eagerly accepting the permission, the famished men not only grasped the honey, but killed sheep and oxen and calves, and slew and ate them in their blood, against the commands of Moses. To prevent them from thus sinning, Jonathan despatched messengers to Saul, and asked leave for them to eat as usual. "Ye have transgressed," said Saul, "but roll hither a large stone, and let each man slay and eat according to our laws." Saul erected an altar of stone to the Lord, before which the cattle were slain. The blood was given to the priest wherewith to sprinkle the altar, and the fat and kidney burnt as a peace-offering; the remainder they cooked and ate. Saul seeing his men were refreshed by

food, and excited by conquest, formed the bold design of following the routed Philistines to their country, and at one blow destroy the enemy who had so long harried his border and oppressed his people. His wishes were no sooner known, than eagerly acceded to by his victorious band. Saul inquired first of the Lord whether he should go up to battle, and the answer was unfavorable. This was attributed by the king to the sin of the people, whereas it was his own sin in rashly cursing them. The early death of Jonathan is supposed by some to be in consequence of this curse. The anger of Saul arose when he saw he must abandon his projected invasion. "Call hither the chiefs of the people!" he cried, "and let us see where lies this sin which is so heavily punished! As the Lord liveth, though it be Jonathan my son, he shall surely die!"

The people loved Jonathan, and fearing for him, they answered not a word when assembled and questioned by Saul. This gloomy silence inflamed the anger of the king, thus leading him into further error instead of repenting his rash oath. Determined to be avenged of his imagi-

nary injury, he commanded the people to stand upon one side of the altar, while he and Jonathan took the other. His chiefs obeyed, saying, "Do as it seemeth good to thee." Saul then, taking Jonathan by the arm, drew him upon one side of the altar, while the representatives of the people stood upon the other. "Cast the lots!" he cried imperiously to the priest. Abiathar cast, and they fell upon Saul and Jonathan. Undismayed, the king called out boldly, "Cast again, priest! cast lots between me and Jonathan my son!" The priest approached the altar, while a shudder passed over the people, who gazed with dread upon their king, his face flushed with passion, and on the slender form of their young prince, whose face was pale, but whose brow was bright with heroic fortitude and submission to his God. Abiathar, with a trembling hand, threw the lots, and turning away, covered his face with his robe. Jonathan the young prince must die!

By resentment Saul had been wrought up to violence, but when he found he had doomed his cherished son to death, his heart sank within him. He could not go back, for he had sworn.

The Lord had been called to the controversy, and he must now fulfill his oath. Stifling his feelings, he turned to Jonathan, "Tell what thou hast done," he asked. Then answered Jonathan mildly, "I did but taste a little honey with the end of my spear, and lo I must die!"

Bitterly did Saul repent his oath, and his mad conduct. His anger had passed, but not its consequences. He could have fallen upon the neck of his son and blessed him, but he had reared a funeral pile for him, and he must now place him upon it. "I have sworn, and God hath heard my oath," he said, struggling with his anguish. "Jonathan, my son, thou must surely die!"

Loud clamors arose from the people when they heard these ruthless words. "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation for Israel?" they cried, "God forbid!" cried others; and murmuring thus, they crowded towards the altar. "As the Lord liveth!" cried the chiefs, "there shall not a hair of his head fall to the ground, for he hath gotten the victory this day!"

Saul dropped the arm of Jonathan. The people pressed around their beloved prince,—

they bore him away from his stern father, who sullenly turned away and entered the royal tent. Jonathan was saved!

The peace which ensued was not of long duration. During it Saul resided in his palace with his family. By his wife, Ahinoam, he had three sons, and two daughters. Their names were, Jonathan, Ishui, Melchi, Michal, and Merab. His father, Kish, and his uncle, Ner, also dwelt with him. The king gathered around him every man renowned for valor and strength, and gradually formed a fine standing army, with numerous horses and chariots; over which, as commander, was placed his cousin Abner. Thus were in part fulfilled the words of Moses and Samuel.

We now behold Saul elevated to the highest point of earthly glory. As a king and a warrior he had gained honor in the land; his enemies were subdued, and his country was at peace. Power, wealth, and fame were his, and according to worldly reasoning he should have happiness. But this was denied him, for homage was not given to Him from whom he had received all these blessings. His faith and obedience were

now put to a heavy trial, and by the result God had decreed him to stand or fall.

The biblical reader is referred back to the history of the Amalekites, who treated so unkindly the Israelites while passing through the wilderness. This tribe was descended from Ham, and inhabited Arabia the stony. The Egyptians who oppressed the Israelites, and the Canaanites who dreaded their approach, were alike descendants of Ham, and for these their brethren's sakes they bore the wanderers no good will. In this part of Arabia were enacted many scenes of that extraordinary drama, in which God, and Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua were actors. A rocky desert, it is encircled by the sea of Elath and the Red Sea, and from its midst arise the everlasting summits of Sinai and Horeb. Among its craggy fastnesses are found fertile valleys, where dwell its tribes. From one of these rushed down the bloody Amalekites, to add one more bitter drop to the cup of sorrows of the wandering tribes of Israel. When it was told them this was a people led by the Lord, they scoffed at the tale and harrassed them sore. At the command of Moses, Joshua selected a

band of warriors to drive the robbers back to their hold. Upon the craggy side of Horeb stood Moses, raising his hands to God in prayer for his people, and Joshua prevailed. But when in weariness his arms sank down at his side, Amalek obtained advantage. Moses called to him Aaron, and Hur, the husband of Miriam, who supporting his hands in their imploring position, the Amalekites were driven away to their mountains. Then commanded God that Moses should write the following in a book, as a memorial to future rulers of Israel: "I will *utterly* put out the remembrance of Amalekite under heaven." This sentence of extermination was not fulfilled until the days of Saul, when we find him setting out to execute this fearful doom, but failing to complete it.

Moses upon Horeb erected an altar to Jehovah-nissi; meaning, "The Lord my banner;" for under the standard of the Lord they had conquered.

When upon the high-place of Balak, Balaam afterwards prophesied against this nation. He pronounced against them the destiny,—they shall perish for ever! Israel reached the pro-

misled land, but ere they entered, listened to the last words of their leader Moses. Among other injunctions, he said to them, "Remember what Amalekite did to thee by the way, when ye were come out of Egypt!" He then recapitulates all they suffered from this nation who "feared not God." He bade them, when the land should be at peace with the neighboring nations, to "blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven!" Moses, when pronouncing this fearful doom, but uttered the words which in the desert he had heard from his God. And so fearful was he of punishment accruing to them if God's express commands were forgotten, that he cries with great solemnity to the people, "thou shalt not forget it!"

To Saul, first king of Israel, is given the mournful task of fulfilling this sentence of extermination against the offending tribe. We tremble lest, in acting according to the dictates of his own will, instead of the decrees of a kind but just God, he should incur the fearful penalty of the disobedient!

From the quiet of his repose in the royal palace, the King of Israel was aroused by the

arrival of the prophet Samuel. Solemnly he walked up to the throne, and thus addressed the monarch:—

“I come with a message to thee, O Saul, from thy ruler and thy God.”

“Speak on, O prophet,” said the king.

“Thus saith the Lord of Hosts:—I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came out of Egypt. Now send Saul and smite Amalek, and *utterly destroy* all that they have, and spare them not. Slay man, woman, infant, ox, sheep, camel, and ass!”

Saul, whose active spirit longed for motion, and who had always acquired more glory in war, readily pledged himself to undertake the mission. Orders were sent out to the tribes, and Saul found himself at the head of a large army stationed at Telaim. He reflected very little upon the cause of this warfare, for his thoughts were filled with his own exaltation, and the treasure he should amass. The past history of Israel he remembered not, nor did he heed the commands of God.

As it was the will of God, the Amalekites fell an easy conquest into the hands of the Israelites.

Saul, flushed with pride, returned home laden with spoils, among which was the cattle he had been charged to destroy. So forgetful also was he of aught but his own glory, that he even spared Agag, king of the offending nation, whose tall, commanding person was a conspicuous object in the triumphal progress he made towards Gilgal. Here he erected an arch of triumph, and then awaited the arrival of Samuel, who was to meet him there.

In the meanwhile the prophet was bowed in mourning within the sanctuary; for the Lord had signified his displeasure at the conduct of Saul.

Forgetting the command of God, and his thoughts filled with himself alone, he had spared Agag and retained much spoil. The sentence had gone forth,—his kingdom should be taken away and given to another!

Samuel grieved for Saul, and all night he remained before the altar in prayer for him. There was no sign of hope given him, and the next day he repaired to Gilgal. Saul received the prophet standing beside an altar, upon which he was preparing to slay the cattle he had taken

as an offering to God! So blind and forgetful was he.

“Blessed be thou, O prophet!” said the king with great complacency; “I have performed the commandments of the Lord.” “Is it so?” said Samuel. “What then meaneth this bleating of sheep in mine ears, and lowing of oxen which I hear?” “It is the spoil of the Amalekites; the best of which I have reserved to sacrifice to the Lord.” “Listen then, O king, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me last night.” “Say on.” “When thou wast poor and humble, the Lord raised thee to the head of the tribes of Israel, and anointed thee their king. In return for these gifts, he asked thee to destroy Agag and all that was his, and hast thou obeyed him?” Saul, still forgetful, replied, “Yea, I have obeyed His commands. As a proof, I have destroyed the Amalekites: behold their king, and the cattle which I brought to sacrifice unto the Lord.” “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings as obedience?” asked the prophet. “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; thy rebellion and stubbornness have displeased the Lord; as thou hast rejected

his word, he hath rejected thee from the throne, and thy kingdom shall be given to another!" The prophet turned away; and Saul, eager to propitiate him, followed him. "I have sinned, O Samuel!" he said. "I have indeed transgressed the commands of God, but it was because I feared the people who desired the spoil. Return to the altar, I pray thee, that I may humble myself before the Lord."

"I will not return with thee, O Saul!" the prophet said. "The Lord hath rejected thee, and I reject thee." In despair, the king grasped the mantle of Samuel to detain him; but as the prophet hastened onward, it rent in his hand. Turning towards the king, Samuel solemnly said, "Behold, this is a sign that the Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee, and hath given it to another!" "I have sinned," the king said humbly; "yet do me not this dishonor before the elders and people of Israel, to return before the service before the altar is over. They await us to commence." Samuel, who always felt deep interest for Saul, willing to oblige him thus far, returned, and they worshipped before the Lord.

Then said Samuel in a terrible voice, "Bring

ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites!" The executioner was also called, who stood, sword in hand, awaiting his fearful order to slay. Agag knew his doom, and said to Samuel, "The bitterness of death is past: I have suffered shame, and now the grave is welcome!"

And Samuel said, "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women! Hew him in pieces!" The command was obeyed.

The prophet then bade Saul farewell, and returned to his home. The king, humbled, but not repentant, also departed to Gilboa.

Samuel loved Saul, and he deeply mourned his errors and his punishment. The prayers of the prophet were unavailing—Saul must suffer, and the only favor he could obtain for the king was the privilege of reigning while he lived; at his death the crown would pass from his family to that of another. To apprise this other of the honor intended him, was now Samuel's province.

"How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?" was asked by the Lord "Fill thy horn with oil,

and go to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king among his sons." "How can I go?" asked Samuel, "If Saul hear it, he will kill me." Samuel was ordered to take a heifer with him, and sacrifice at Bethlehem. Small altars were erected in most of the towns, at which it had been the custom to sacrifice and ask counsel of the Lord, when any crime had taken place or event occurred in that part of the country.

Great anxiety was felt by the inhabitants of Bethlehem, when it was known that the prophet of the Lord approached the town. Came he to make sacrifice for some unknown crime? or came he to pronounce upon them some severe decree of the Lord against them? Thus ever trembling are those whose consciences tell them they have done that which deserves rebuke. The elders of the city, in their robes of state, arranged themselves upon each side of the gate, to await the coming of Samuel. The prophet approached upon his ass of silver hue, with his white, flowing robe around him, and his trains with the heifer following. The chief of the elders stood before him and thus addressed him.

“Comest thou peaceably to us, O prophet?” to which he answered: “Peaceably, O Elders! I come to sacrifice to the Lord, and ask Him to bless the purpose which I would undertake.” Then addressing himself to Jesse and his sons, he said: “Sanctify yourselves and come with me to the feast.” After the ceremony of sanctification—which consisted in washing their clothes, and otherwise purifying themselves—Jesse and his sons approached the altar upon which Samuel was sacrificing the heifer. Samuel, in private, when they had retired to the room in which Samuel had caused his share of the sacrifice to be sent and a feast laid, acquainted Jesse with the errand upon which he was sent, and desired him to cause his sons to pass before him one by one.

First came Eliab, having a tall, powerful frame and attractive countenance. “Surely,” thought Samuel, “the Lord’s anointed is before me.” But he was made aware he was not to be the future Lord of Israel, and told from on high that the “Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

Eliab passed on, and Jesse caused Abinadab to approach. "Neither hath the Lord chosen him," said the prophet. Shammah was then called, and passed before them. "Neither hath the Lord chosen him," said Samuel. Then seven of the sons of Jesse were presented to Samuel, who was perplexed that no sign had been given him which was the future king. "Are here all thy children?" he asked Jesse. "There is another," his father replied: "he is but a small lad, and keepeth the sheep; he cannot be chosen before all his elder brethren." "Send and fetch him," said the prophet, "for I cannot sit down to the feast until I have seen him." He was sent for; and soon after there entered the room a youth whom Samuel at once recognized as the future sovereign of Israel. The countenance of David, the youngest son of Jesse, expressed sweetness and majesty; his cheeks were ruddy, his eyes dark, clear, and sparkling, his hair black and curling, his frame finely proportioned and powerful, and his whole aspect spoke him at once "chief among ten thousand." Samuel approached David, and, pouring upon his head the sacred oil from the horn, he anointed him King over

Israel. From that moment the Spirit of the Lord descended upon him, and endued him with wisdom and prudence, strength and valor; a spirit of prophecy, with knowledge of music, that he might prophesy to his harp; and with many gifts, whereby he might govern with judgment his kingdom.

The whole family then seated themselves to the feast; after which, Samuel, charging Jesse and David to conceal for awhile what had just been enacted, departed for his house in Ramiah. While the Spirit of the Lord descended upon David, it was withdrawn from Saul. The grace which was vouchsafed him departed, and left the unhappy king to the power of his own evil heart. Pride and passion ruled him; fear of God's punishments rendered him weak and timorous; while a knowledge that his successor was appointed, was, perhaps, near him, deriding him, or communicating to the people that Saul was deserted by God and the prophet, filled him with suspicion and rage. As these deadly passions ruled the king, his conduct became such as to lead his servants and courtiers to believe him possessed with an evil spirit. His health

gave way, and, after everything had been tried to relieve the gloom and pain which seemed to distress him, music was at last proposed. Some of the head lords of the court approached the king to gain his assent to this. Kneeling before him, they said, "Let our lord now command thy servants, now before thee, to seek out the son of Jesse, who is a skillful player on the harp, and perchance his music may soothe thee." The king consented, and David was sent for. The affairs of men are so skillfully interwoven by the Ruler of mankind, that only the devout watcher can perceive the hand of the Lord winding and weaving the threads. The illness of Saul and the relief procured from music seem natural circumstances; but all that look may see David led by the Lord to the court he was soon to govern, and into the midst of events in which he must be an actor. As it was customary to carry presents when a prince was visited, Jesse sent with his son an ass, laden with bread, wine, and a kid. The pleasing form and countenance of David immediately prepossessed Saul in his favor, and he was given the office of armor-bearer, that he might be induced to

remain in court. The effect of David's music was such as had been anticipated. When the remembrance of what he was stirred within the bosom of Saul,—when he knew he was forsaken of God and of Samuel, these black and gloomy thoughts possessed his heart, and he retired to some private place in his palace or garden, where he might brood over his sorrows. Then David, seated at a distance, would touch the strings of his harp, and the soft melody would diffuse itself into the soul of Saul, and awake a milder feeling, and arouse him from his melancholy. Perhaps such Psalms as the 23d might have been sung, which gives hope to the penitent, suffering heart.

The feebleness of the King of Israel was soon known among his enemies; and taking advantage of it, the Philistines made a sudden inroad into the country, and ere Saul was aware of their intentions, they had penetrated as far as Shochoh in Judah.

The inspired hymns and psalms of David had however aroused him from his gloomy lethargy, and with some of his ancient energy he summoned his people to battle, and sought the ene-

my. He found them encamped upon the slope of a hill, which arose from one side of the valley of Elah; and upon another which arose from the other side of the valley, Saul stationed his host in front of them. While the two bands were thus eyeing each other, behold there cometh forth from the camp of the Philistines an enormous man, clad in brass armor, who defied the Israelites to send forth their champion likewise, and thus let the war be decided by the fate of the two warriors. This sort of combat was common in those days, and had the Israelites possessed a man equal in strength and stature, the challenge might have been accepted. But who could compete with this man of might? His name was Goliath, and he was a descendant of those Anakims or giants which Joshua defeated and drove into Gath. His frame was large and powerful; his height eleven feet. Upon his head was a helmet of brass; over his body a coat of mail formed of scales of brass closely folding upon each other, and which weighed 156 lbs.; plates of the like metal covered his legs; in his hand he bore a spear, the handle of which was twenty-six feet long, its iron point weighing

eighteen pounds. Before him came a man bearing a great shield of shining brass. His challenge the men of Saul could not obey, as certain death awaited them, and the camp was filled with gloom and shame.

Morning and evening for forty days came forth this monstrous warrior, defying the Israelites, and jeering at their cowardice; and no man dared to meet him. At last there came a gentle shepherd boy, and to the astonishment and derision of all, declared himself the champion of Israel, and prepared to combat the giant. This boy was David. When Saul went to battle, the eldest sons of Jesse joined him, and David, being considered too young to go to battle, returned to his aged father; and although he knew he was an anointed king, humbly tended his flocks. But his ambitious father desired to see him among scenes more fitting his future destiny, and said to him, "Take, my son, a measure of this parched corn, and these ten loaves to thy brethren in the camp; carry, also, these cheeses to their captain, and ask how thy brothers fare." David obeyed his father, and soon reached the

camp, as it was only four miles distant, and entered it, leaving his load at the outer entrenchment. Undaunted by the din and shouting and confusion of the camp, David sought his brethren, and delivered his father's message.

While they were talking, Goliath, the giant, came forth in the valley, as usual, defying the Israelites. As the morning sun fell upon him, he seemed an angel of wrath. Brandishing his spear of flame and flashing sword, he cried,—“Why dare ye stand thus in battle array before me?—am I not the champion of Philistia, and ye but servants of Saul! If ye have a man among you, send him forth to meet me!” Dismayed, the soldiers drew back; while Saul, again the slave to the terror which once before overcame him, sat on the ground, his face buried in his hands, unable to command his men to advance or retreat. Beside him, covered with gloom, stood Jonathan and Abner, his generals, vainly entreating leave to meet the giant. Universal fear reigned around. As David gazed upon this man, the might of the Lord's anointed swelled through his frame. Again, as if from a

trumpet, came these braggadocia words,—“I defy the armies of Israel this day! Give me a man, that we may fight together!”

The men who stood near David urged each other to go forward, and as incentives, repeated the promises of Saul to the conqueror of Goliath. “What say you shall be done to the man,” asked David, “who killeth this Philistine and taketh away the reproach of Israel?” “The man who killeth him shall be enriched,” they answered; “his family freed from taxes and ennobled; and himself married to the king’s daughter.” “Uncircumcised Philistine!” exclaimed young David. “Dares he defy the armies of the living God? Let him come forth, for I will meet and slay him!” Eliab, the eldest brother of David, thought him too young and forward, thus to mingle in affairs too great for him, and reproached him angrily. “I know the pride and naughtiness of thy heart, David,” he said. “Thou art ever ready to come down to see the army. Hie back to thy sheep.” “Nay,” said David, “what have I done to deserve this rebuke? was there not a cause for my coming hither?” He then turned from his brother, for

he felt a power within him, moving him on to attempt the combat, and loudly declared his wish to do battle with the giant. The words of David were repeated to Saul, who sent for him and questioned him. "Let no man's heart fail him because of this blustering giant," he said; "thy servant will go and fight with him." Saul gazed with surprise upon the slender youth, thus boldly seeking to combat the huge champion of Gath. "Thou art not able to fight this Philistine," he said, "for thou art but a lad, and he a man practiced in war from his youth." "Thy servant ere now hath slain bears and lions; is this man more strong or more savage than they?" said the young man, his face glowing, &c. "Once, when thy servant kept his father's sheep, there came a lion and took a lamb from the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and slew him!"

The ardor and the energy of the young man, while relating his feats of daring; the inward might which seemed to swell his soul and burst in light from his eyes, so astonished and awed

the king and those around him, that they saw the Lord was with him, and destined him to wipe off the shame of Israel. "Permit me to seek this uncircumcised Philistine, O king," said David. "The Lord, who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, he will deliver me from the hand of Goliath."

And Saul said unto David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee!"

The king ordered David to be armed with coat of mail, sword, and helmet, but the youthful warrior rejected these, for he knew he was an agent of the Lord, and went not in his own might.

Loud blustered the giant, and brightly flashed his sword, as he defied the men of Israel to meet him in fight; when behold, to the astonishment of either army, a stripling, clad in a muslin tunic, and bareheaded, and armed but with a shepherd's staff, and a few pebbles which he picked up from the brook, descended from the camp of Israel towards the Philistine!

With a haughty stride, preceded by his sword-bearer, came forward the Philistine until near enough to see the champion who had ac-

cepted his challenge for combat; and when he beheld the rosy-cheeked youth before him, scorn and anger flashed from his eyes of fire. "Am I a dog," he cried fiercely, "that thou comest out to me armed with a staff?" Then, with loud imprecations calling upon Dagon and other of his false gods, he whirled his sword around his head, crying, "Come on, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field!" David, instead of flying with terror, as the Philistine expected, stood undaunted, and gazing firmly into the face of his opponent, said, "Thou comest to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied!" These solemn words, which seemed to come from some power greater than that of the youthful lips which pronounced them, and the holy light which shone from his pure eyes, produced an awe in the heart of the warrior which he in vain strove to subdue. "This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hands," continued David, "and I will smite thee, and take thy head from thee, and will give the carcasses of

all the army of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, as thou hast threatened *me*! This I will do with the help of the Lord, that all the world may fear the God of Israel, and know, he needeth not the sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give it into our hands!" Goaded to fury by the words of David, Goliath rushed forward, with uplifted spear, and when all the spectators expected to see the young man fall, lo, the huge champion suddenly staggered and fell at the feet of David. A stone which the latter had flung from his sling had struck his forehead and killed him instantly. There was one moment of silent wonder and consternation in either host; but when the Philistines beheld the Israelite boy spring upon the body of their champion, unsheathe his sword and cut off his head, they were smitten with terror and fled. With loud shouts the Israelites pursued, and drove them as far as one of their own cities, Ekron, while their dead lay thick along the roads. They then returned and plundered their camp, where a rich spoil rewarded them for all they had suffered from their enemy.

Saul returned to his camp after the defeat of the Philistines, surrounded by his officers and courtiers, who offered their congratulations to him upon his victory. But the brow of the king grew dark, as he looked from his tent and beheld the youthful David loading an ass with the head and the armor of Goliath of Gath; for to him alone was the victory due.

"Whose son is this lad?" he asked of his general, Abner, "for as I have promised, I must ennoble his family, and give him my daughter."

"As thy soul liveth," replied Abner, "I cannot tell his father's name.

"Go forth, and inquire of him whose son he is," said the king,—and in obedience to this request, Abner brought David before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

"Whose son art thou, young man?" inquired the king.

"I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite."

The modesty with which the young hero spoke, and the noble soul which shone in his countenance, greatly charmed the king and all who stood around him.

Saul conferred upon him a high rank in the court, and command in the army, and bade him henceforth leave his sheep and take his abode in the palace.

Jonathan, the son of Saul, had always admired the young David while at his father's court as a musician; but now that he had so acquitted himself in deeds of arms, his soul was knitted to his in bands of love which never were severed except by death. He called David to him when his father had ceased speaking, and with many expressions of friendship, threw over his shoulders his robe, which was of worsted woven with many colors, such as was usually worn by children of noble families. He also gave him his girdle of silk embroidered with gold and jewels, his sword, and his bow. Giving the robe to another was in those days a token of great honor, and as such David gratefully received it, although he knew he was appointed to a rank far higher than that of Jonathan; and bowed himself to Jonathan as a faithful friend and servant.

The victory complete and all the spoil gathered, Saul and his army turned their faces towards

Gibeah, the royal home. From every town they passed, the people came forth with shouts to meet them, accompanied with singing women, who, to the tabret, the flute, and cymbal, sang the heroes' praises. David, clad in his royal robe of many hues, excited much attention, and was everywhere greeted as the real conqueror of the Philistines.

The singing women especially sounded his praises. From one band was heard, "Saul has slain his thousands!"—"But," answered another band, "David has slain his tens of thousands!"

To see himself superseded thus by an unknown youth, was a grievous wound to the king's vanity. "The people would exalt this boy above their sovereign," he said. "Perchance they would give him my throne likewise!" Saul spoke jestingly, but envy had taken a deep hold upon his heart, and enmity succeeded to the friendship he had professed for David.

Once more established in his own palace, and all the excitement attendant on war being at an end, melancholy and jealousy again took possession of Saul. David's great popularity with every one at the court, and the love of

Jonathan towards him, excited the king's envy and suspicion. He knew his people's love had departed from him, and he feared David was the successor appointed by Samuel, and who would be gladly received in his room. In order to soothe his gloomy humors, David again took his harp and sang to it some of his divinely inspired verses. They failed of their usual effect; and one day, while Saul was brooding over his evil thoughts, jealousy and fear so overcame him, that he threw his javelin at David, determined to slay him. David avoided it in time, and left the apartment. When the cloud seemed to have passed from the brow of Saul, David again ventured into his presence, but the sight of him awoke the evil nature of the king, and again he attempted to destroy him. David's second escape induced Saul to cease the attempt on his life; but that he might be rid of his rival, he appointed him captain of a troop, and sent him against the Philistines, hoping he might fall in battle. The people also, with whom David was a great favorite, murmured that the promise of Saul should not be fulfilled, in the marriage of David to one of his daughters.

"Thou shalt marry my daughter, the Princess Merab," said Saul to David; "but first perform some valiant deed befitting the son of a king." David deprecated all such desire as being unbecoming his station as a shepherd, and replied to Saul, "Who am I, or my father's family, that I should seek to be son-in-law to the king? Thy servant will perform any service to his king, nor ask reward therefor."

"Go then," said the king, "and fight the Lord's battles, and attack the outposts of the Philistines."

Saul secretly rejoiced at being thus easily rid of David, as he never expected to see him return alive. In this he was disappointed, for the young warrior returned crowned with victory, and passed through the city towards the palace, amid the acclamations of the admiring people. In Saul was now seen the fruit of the indulgence of wicked passions: as the raging ocean wave, dashing against the cliff, wears it away little by little until it tumbles from its foundation into the deep, so the fall of Saul from truth and honor was rapid and mournful.

When he heard of the approach of David,

he hastened and married his daughter Merab to Adriel, son of Barzillai the Meholathite; a marriage which, as it was done to dishonor the Lord's anointed, was severely visited upon themselves and their children afterwards.

The remonstrances of the people, and of Jonathan, however, induced Saul to promise David his second daughter, Michal, who had long been secretly attached to the young hero. David, however, had no faith in the promises of the King; he was aware of the enmity of Saul, and declined the honor intended him. Saul did not really intend to fulfill this promise, but meant it to be another snare whereby he hoped to be rid of David. His refusal accordingly annoyed him, and defeated his wicked plans; and he employed some of his confidential courtiers to persuade David to accept the princess. David was not easily to be won, although the beauty of Michal would in other circumstances have induced him joyfully to accept her. "The king lightly esteems me," he said to the courtiers; "how then can I consent to be his son-in-law?" "Nay, David," replied these artful men, "the king hath delight in

thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son-in-law."

As a last ground of refusal, David spoke of his poverty. "It is no light thing for a poor man to become a king's son-in-law," he said. "My wife will scorn me if I bring no dowry." These words reported to the king, suggested to his evil heart another, and he imagined a decisive means of causing David's destruction.

Saul said to his councillors, "Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth no other dowry than a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, that he may be avenged of his enemies." These foreskins Josephus and many commentators think to be heads, or scalps, skulls of his foes. David was given only a short time to perform this exploit, which the cruel king deemed a sure means of his destruction; as he might easily rout a band of these marauders, yet if he stopped to sever their heads, fresh bands would have time to come up and conquer him. David's love to Michal, and trust in God, induced him to accept these conditions. Again was Saul disappointed by the triumphant return of David with his spoils. Ashamed again of

breaking his word, Saul now did not retract, and David married the princess Michal. Every snare which Saul had set for David had hitherto redounded to his credit, until he had risen in the people's esteem as high as once stood Saul. This so increased the enmity of the king, that he determined to accuse him of ambition, and as dangerous to the state, and thus have him publicly executed. Jonathan was commanded to head a party of guards, and bring David as a prisoner to the palace. This Jonathan could not refuse, but sent secretly first to David, who dwelt in another building opening upon one of the palace courts, and bade him conceal himself in the garden or court. David obeyed him, and the guards sought him in vain. Soon after, Jonathan, who had a sincere friendship for David, and who had experienced none of that jealousy which had so moved his father, led the king in his walks to that part of the garden where David was concealed, in hopes of working upon his good feelings and bringing about a reconciliation between them. When near enough for David to hear, the generous prince spoke warmly of David, brought to the king's remem-

brance the services he had rendered the kingdom, his modesty and integrity, and the unlikelihood of his entertaining views of the throne. The cloud seemed to pass from the brow of Saul as he listened, for he relied much upon the good judgment of Jonathan, and milder views were ruling his heart. This his son perceived, and continued his defence of his friend. "Thou knowest David put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, Goliath, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all our land: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice; wherefore wilt thou sin against the innocent, and slay David without a cause?" His evil conduct thus brought plainly before his eyes in a modest but firm manner by his son, whom he so respected and loved, wrought a change in Saul, and he expressed sorrow for his mistaken judgment of David. To assure Jonathan, he sealed his promises with an oath: "As the Lord liveth," he said, "David shall not be slain!" Saul was penitent, and sincerely believed he should respect these promises; but truly said the wise Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things."

Then joyfully flew Jonathan towards his friend, whom he brought to Saul, at whose feet they both cast themselves. The king kindly raised and blessed the friends, and peace was once more in the palace. This harmony, however, was of short duration, for the Philistines again made an inroad into the land of the Hebrews, and David, with his men, were sent to repel them. They fled before this powerful warrior, and his triumphant return awoke again the envy and malice which had lain dormant in the heart of Saul.

While David was singing to his harp a triumphant song of victory, giving God the honor of the battle, and perhaps using the words of his 27th Psalm, "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this (trust in God) I will be confident." Saul, enraged at the admiration his strains produced, again, with sudden wrath, seized his javelin and hurled it at him. David again escaped, and hurried to his house, where he shut himself in. Here even he was not safe from the insane king. Michal, his wife, who tenderly loved him, informed him the door

was beset with guards, who had orders to slay him whenever he appeared. "Now then fly this night from the back window," she said, "or thou wilt be slain!" It was at these sad moments perhaps that the words recorded as his 59th Psalm burst from the lips of David: "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those that rise up against me: deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. For lo, they lie in wait for my soul."

Sadness soon ceases as he remembers the goodness of God, and he says, "But I will sing of thy power, yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble." His faithful wife assisted him to escape, by lowering him from a window, and David fled to Ramah, where he placed himself under the protection of Samuel.

Soon after, the guards of Saul burst into the house, calling for David. Michal, to conceal her husband's flight, and thus gain a little time, put an image in his bed, and sent word he was ill and could not arise. This image was,—ac-

According to the Jewish writers, Abarbinal, and Abendana,—a painted statue of David, which, according to the custom of loving wives, was carved, and stood in one of her rooms. This face, resembling David, she surrounded with goat's hair, to appear more natural, and the messengers, deceived, returned to Saul. The king, however, once so amiable and noble, now sunk into the depths of iniquity, determined not to be defrauded of his prey, and bade the men bring him, sick or well. Then the artifice of Michal was discovered, and she was brought before her enraged father. In a terrible voice he exclaimed to her, "Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away my enemy, that he is escaped?" Frightened by the king's violence, Michal was tempted to resort to falsehood, and declared David had threatened her life, if she refused to do thus. This falsehood was soon visited upon her head, for instead of boldly declaring her affection for David, and asserting his innocence of any evil, she, by this base assertion, added to the wrath of Saul, and led him to think she had ceased to love him, and to marry her to Phalti, one of his nobles. We

behold the Israelites now reduced to a state of grievous bondage; slaves to a cruel and treacherous man, before whose bloody decrees their bravest and best is obliged to fly. Truly they had reaped their reward,—they had thrown off the authority of their holy prophet; they had asked a king, and were now only suffering from the consequences. All this Samuel had predicted when he warned them of a king's oppressions, and said, "Ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day!" Neither did he hear them when wearied with the cruelty and violence of Saul; for trouble and war harried the land while he lived, and indeed until the kingdom of Israel was at an end.

The persecuted David in the meantime dwell in peace and safety at Ramah, with Samuel, in the college of prophets. In this building young men were taught by Samuel the principles of their religion, and sacred music, that they might be able to go forth as preachers to teach the people their duty. It was situated in Naioth, near the city, upon high ground, from whence

there was a fine prospect of the ocean. Here we may suppose David procured those images of the great deep which are so interspersed throughout his sacred songs. Thus meditating upon "this great and wide sea," he adds:

"There go the ships; there is that leviathan
Whom thou hast made to play therein."

Again, in the hundred and seventh psalm, he says, "Those see most the works of the Lord, and his wonders on the deep, that go down to the sea in ships; for he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind which lifteth the waves thereof: they mount up to the heaven; they go down to the depths."

The restless spirit of Saul, which could know no peace until David was destroyed, led him to send a band of men to seize him even in the sacred college. When they entered the hall and beheld these holy men seated upon each side engaged in worship, and Samuel at the head of the room preaching in words given him from the Lord; while, glowing with youthful fervor, David knelt at his feet, breathing those divine strains which yet stir the heart of those

who hear them ; the sacred and imposing scene —“the beauty of holiness”—so affected them that they repented their evil intentions, and, kneeling down, joined in the worship. A second and a third time did Saul send again to take David, with the same striking result. The events did not deter this wicked king from his iniquitous purposes ; but, so lost was he to all good, that he determined to go in person and seize David, even in Samuel’s presence. But Saul could not approach the city where he had been chosen from a low estate to be made sovereign over the land of Israel, nor enter the presence of that holy prophet who had anointed him by the Lord’s command, without such thoughts and emotions as to show him the wickedness of his purposes. He remembered his youth and early innocence, the great favor and mercy he had received ; and, contrasting it with his present corrupt and wicked state, the sharpest remorse and deepest penitence took such possession of him, that, entering the college hall, he threw off his armor and royal robes as being unworthy to wear them, and falling prostrate at the feet of Samuel, laid mourning and grovel-

ling in the dust until the following day. The Holy Spirit which filled the place struck him down, and he lay a spectacle and a warning to all whose hearts should harbor ambition or love of power. Samuel showed the tenderest consideration for the degraded monarch, although he knew his penitence was not deep, having only been produced by early recollections and the presence of the prophet. A reconciliation was concluded between him and David, who was required to resort to court as usual, with the promise of better treatment.

David put no trust in the promises of Saul, but hastened to Gibeah before him, and sought for Jonathan. "Tell me, Jonathan," he said, "what have I done to thy father? what 'sin have I committed, that he seeks thus my life?" "God forbid that thou shouldst die!" replied his friend. "My father hath nothing against thee; for he tells me everything, and would certainly inform me if he thought thou wert guilty. Thou mayst trust him now, for hath he not sworn to Samuel?" "Nay, my friend; thy father knows I have found grace in thy eyes, and conceals his intentions from thee, lest thou

be grieved. But, truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, he still seeks my life; there is but a step between me and death, and here I cannot remain."

"David, my friend," said Jonathan, "whatever thy soul desireth tell me, and I will do it for thee." "To-morrow is the feast of the New Moon, and the king will expect me at his table as usual; but I would rather keep this feast with my family at Bethlehem. This will be a trial of thy father's intentions. If he show no displeasure at my absence, then we shall know his evil feelings towards me have ceased; but if he be wroth, then be sure he means me some harm. Now, then, Jonathan," he added, with energy, "deal truly with thy servant in that which I shall propose. Remember the covenant of the Lord which has bound us together, and do what I request; or, if thou thinkest me guilty, rather slay me thyself, than betray me to thy cruel father." "Far be it from thee to distrust me, David. If my father harbor ill against thee, thinkest thou I will not show it thee?"

"What I propose, then," answered David,

“is, that thou shalt devise some plan whereby I may know thy father’s intentions; some cunning plan, that neither thou nor I may be betrayed.” “Come out in the fields, where I will accompany thee homeward, and in secret we may discuss our plans.” When alone, without witnesses, Jonathan, holding his right hand up to heaven, said, “I vow, by the Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father as thou hast proposed, whatever good or ill he may intend thee I will show it thee! The Lord recompense to Jonathan all evil he may do to David, if he prove false to him!” Then turning to his friend, he said, “David, after this thou mayest repose confidence in me; for if it please my father to do thee evil, I will show it to thee and send thee away in peace; and the Lord be with thee, as he once was with my father. All I ask, in return, is kindness and protection to me and my house when the Lord shall cut off thy enemies, and thou shalt ascend the throne of Israel.” So Jonathan and David made a solemn league and covenant for themselves and for their families, calling the Lord to witness and take vengeance upon them, if their vows

should be broken. After agreeing upon a plan of communication in future, the loving friends took an affectionate farewell, and separated.

The next day was the feast of the New Moon. The silver trumpet sounded; bullocks and rams and spotless lambs were led to sacrifice; while flour and oil and wine were poured over the altar of the Lord. A great feast took place in the palace of Saul, at which all his nobles and high officers were expected to appear. It had been usual for David and Jonathan, sons of Saul, to sit upon each side of him; but Jonathan, fearing his father's anger when David's absence was known, gave Abner his seat, and sat below him. Saul noticed David's empty seat, but thinking some uncleanness, by having touched a corpse or other things, might have forced him to abstain from meat, did not remark upon it. When, however, on the second day he did not appear, he asked, sternly, "Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday nor to-day?" Jonathan replied, "David asked leave of me to visit his family at Bethlehem, and I permitted him to go." "Thou perverse and rebellious son!" exclaimed the

king with great fury. "Thou art leagued with the son of Jesse; but expect no favor at his hands, if, after my death, he mount the throne; thee and thy mother will be cast out to shame. If he liveth, the throne and kingdom are lost to thee; therefore fetch him that he may perish."

With true friendship, braving his father's anger, Jonathan asked, "Wherefore shall he be slain? what evil hath he done?"

At this defence of David, Saul was so overcome with blind fury as to snatch the javelin which, used as a sceptre, stood beside his chair, and hurled it at his beloved son. Jonathan narrowly escaped, and hurried from the apartment, burning with fierce anger, while the court was filled with horror and dismay at this outrage.

The next day Jonathan sought the field where it had been agreed David was to lie concealed, when he returned from Bethlehem; and, to avert suspicion, took with him his bow and arrows, as if to shoot at a mark. David, from his hiding-place, watched him for the signal of peace or war, life or death, which, as had been arranged at their last interview, was to be given by throwing the arrows far or near. "Run and pick the

arrows which I shoot," said Jonathan to his quiver-bearer. Drawing his bow to its extreme tension, Jonathan shot far past the mark which was set up—a signal to David that he must fly far away.

As the boy sought the arrow, Jonathan called out in a loud voice, as if to him, but meant for David's ear, "Make speed! haste! stay not! the arrow is beyond thee." The unconscious lad gathered the arrows in haste and carried them to his master. "I am tired of this amusement," said the prince; "take them to the palace." Although Jonathan had bade his friend adieu, yet, seeing no one near, he ventured towards the grove where he lay, to take a last farewell.

The decree had gone forth; exile and shame were now to be David's portion, and he well might cry,—“Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul.” The stricken one came forth and bowed himself three times to the ground, in humble reverence of the chastisement of the Lord, and in gratitude to his only friend, so faithful found when “deadly enemies compassed him about.” The loving friends then threw themselves into each other's

arms, kissed each other and wept bitter tears. Jonathan mourned over the sin of his father and loss of his friend; but David's distress was deeper, as he was banished from home and friends and wife and honor, to be a lonely wanderer, surrounded on every side with all the snares and pitfalls a cruel and powerful king could spread for his destruction. He was young yet, and his sorrow was too great to remember, as he did afterwards, the mercy already shown him, and promised him from God. Throwing himself upon the ground, with groans of anguish he cried,—“I sink in deep mire where there is no standing; I am come unto deep waters where the floods overflow me!”

Jonathan raised his friend, and tenderly embracing him, bade him a sad farewell. “Be comforted, my friend,” he said. “Go in peace, trusting in God and in me. Remember the covenant we have sworn before the Lord, saying,—The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. Thou hast one sure and faithful friend; let this thought and hope of better days revive thee. And now we must part, lest thou be observed, and, per-

haps, slain,—Farewell, David,—my friend, farewell.

. In deep sadness Jonathan turned and sought the palace, while the young hero, deliverer of Israel, was forced to fly and hide himself in caves and rocks from the persecutions of its king. In the course of his wanderings he came near the city of Nob, and resolved to enter the city, and at the tabernacle which was then in that city, throw himself before the Lord, and worship. Ahimelech, the high-priest, seeing David approach, worn and travel-soiled, without his usual guards and attendants, judged he was flying from some new persecution of Saul, and feared he would bring the wrath of the cruel Saul upon Nob if they harbored him. “Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?” he asked of David. Then the famished and lonely wanderer, fearing if the truth were known he should be again driven forth, was tempted to resort to artifice, and informed the priest he was sent upon a private mission by Saul, and his men would rejoin him in a short time. This falsehood was punished by the destruction of the priests, which loaded the soul of David with

remorse, as will be afterwards seen. The expression in the 119th Psalm, written long after, is also thought to refer to this fatal error. "My soul melteth for heaviness: Remove from me the way of lying." Before the altar stood the golden table of shew bread, encased in plates of gold, and laid up before the Lord, as memorial of the goodness of God in supplying his people with bread. This, when a week old, was the perquisite of the priest, to be replaced every Sabbath by fresher bread. David, pressed with hunger, entreated the priest for some of his share of the bread. He, knowing the future power of David, dared not refuse, and after ascertaining that he was not tainted with any impurity, consented. Other men are spoken of as eating with David, but it is not known to whom the allusion refers, unless it be Doeg and his men. This man was a groom belonging to Saul, who resorted to the tabernacle to fulfill some vow.

David eating the shew-bread is referred to by our Lord, in justifying his disciples in plucking the corn upon the Sabbath day. After satisfying his hunger, David asked the priest if he could not furnish him with sword or spear.

“The sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, is here,” replied Ahimelech. “It is wrapped in a cloth behind the Ephod. If thou wilt, take that, for it is the only one here.” “There is none like it; give it to me.” said David. In Nob the wanderer could not long repose, as he feared that Doeg would report him to Saul; so bidding adieu to the kind priest, he again set out, nor dared he rest until his own country was far behind him. He entered the country of his enemies the Philistines, and even dared to go to Gath, the city of Goliath. So long time having passed, he hoped to remain unknown. He was however recognized by some of the people, who took him before Achish the king. “Is not this David, the conqueror of Goliath?” they asked the king. “Yea,” said others, “this is he of whom the singers said, Saul hath slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands.” Now when the penetrating eye of Achish was upon him, and his accusers, pressing around him, might David cry,—“Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths,

as a ravening and a roaring lion." He might justly think himself now in the valley of the shadow of death, for if he were known, instant death would be his fate. But he called upon the Lord, and he heard him in his strait. The idea came to him of feigning himself mad, and to the astonishment of all, he threw himself into furious contortions, and uttered the wildest nonsense. The friendship which afterwards subsisted between Achish and David renders it probable that he was not deceived by his feigned insanity, but pretended to be, in order to save the unfortunate young man from the wrath of the people. He was willing also to propitiate so formidable an enemy, now also an enemy of Saul. To this end he cried out,—“Lo, ye see the man is mad: have I not madmen enough around me, that ye must bring this fellow to my house? Away with him, and let him depart the city!” David went on his way rejoicing in spite of all his troubles, for he felt that the Lord was on his side, and that his frequent preservation from such imminent dangers was proof of Divine assistance.

While pursuing his lonely path, he is supposed

to have composed the 34th Psalm. It is said by commentators to be arranged with much art in three parts. First he praises God,—“I will bless the Lord at all times. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his troubles.” Secondly, he teaches the way of truth,—“Come, ye little children—I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” And thirdly, sums up with this cheering truth,—“The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants, and none of them who trust in him shall be desolate.”

We next find the persecuted wanderer has taken up his desolate abode in a cave, as he dared not trust himself among the haunts of men. This cave was near the large and beautiful city of Adullam, upon the southern confines of Judah. Here, alone, and abandoned of all but God, he poured out his soul to him in prayer and praises, as may be seen in the 56th and 57th Psalms.

The gloomy vault of the cave resounded with the melodious voice of praise. What is it to him that his enemies mark his steps, who have prepared a net for him, and would swallow him up; his heart is fixed in trust of God, who, al-

though exalted in his glory far above this earth, yet he watched the path of his children to protect them. "Thou tellest my wanderings," he sang; "put thou my tears in thy bottle, are they not in thy book?"

As soon as David's retreat was known, he was surrounded by a body of men, composed partly of his friends, but mostly of those whom the tyranny of Saul had driven forth from their homes. Among these were three celebrated warriors, Adino, Eleaser, and Shammah. Seeing himself thus supported, David ventured from his cave, and sought refuge in Moab, where his parents were placed under the protection of the king, while he shut himself in a fortress. Here the prophet Gad, probably sent by Samuel, found him, and bade him leave his retreat and repair to Judah among his people. When Saul heard that David had appeared, surrounded by a band of warriors, his wrath was great, and like many weak minds, he vented it upon those around him. He was then encamped in Gibeah. His station, according to a custom of that day, was beneath a large tree, where he stood with the emblem of power, a javelin, in his hand.

Around him were his chief officers and courtiers, mostly of his own tribe.

"Hear now, ye Benjamites!" he exclaimed, looking cowlingly around him, "ye see how the son of Jesse hath increased in power, and lieth in wait for me, and none of you told it me. Ye have doubtless conspired with my son Jonathan against me. What would ye? Can this rebel give you fields and vineyards as I can? Will he make ye captains as I have!"

No one ventured to answer except Doeg the Edomite, who, in hope of reward, eagerly related the attention which had been shown David by Ahimelech the high-priest at Nob, and that he had girt the son of Jesse with the sword of Goliath. At this news, rage possessed the soul of Saul. He sent immediately for Ahimelech, who came with all his sons and a large company of priests. "Why have ye conspired against me," cried the king when Ahimelech stood before him, "thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread and the sword of Goliath!"

Ahimelech sought to excuse himself upon the plea that David being the son-in-law of the king

deserved all this honor. The wicked king, listening only to his passion, cried out,—“Thou shalt die—thou and all thy father’s house.” He then turned to his men, and bade them slay the priests, but all shrunk in horror from touching the priests of the Lord. Then the king said to Doeg—“Turn thou and fall upon the priests.” Ever ready in wickedness, Doeg and his band attacked the priests, and after murdering them, followed on to Nob, and utterly destroyed the city and its inhabitants, except Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, who escaped and joined David.

The grief of David was great when he learnt how much blood had been shed upon his account. “Alas!” he said, “I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father’s house. But I knew, when I saw Doeg, he would surely tell Saul. Abide thou with me, Abiathar, with me thou shalt be in safety!” At this time, it is supposed, David wrote the 52d Psalm,—“Why boasteth thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?”

While thus lying idle, surrounded by his followers, David learnt that the Philistines had made an attack upon Keilah, one of the cities

of Judah. David's wish was to march immediately to its rescue, but ever willing to surrender his will to that of his Almighty Father, he sent for Abiathar, who now acted as high-priest.

Fortunately, Abiathar had brought with him the robes of office, and now stood before David clothed with the Ephod, a girdle of blue gold, purple and crimson, which crossed his chest and waist, and then fell to the ground,—and the Urim and Thummim, those mysterious jewels by which the pleasure of the Lord was known.

The answer being favorable, David and his men advanced towards Keilah, defeated the Philistines, and after releasing the city, they entered and fortified themselves there.

The persecuted David was not long to abide in this haven of rest. News was soon brought that Saul with a large army was marching against it. Again David called for the high-priest. When the usual sacrifices had been made upon an altar of stone erected for the occasion, David, prostrated before it, cried to the Lord,—“O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee tell thy servant if Saul will come down to Keilah, as thy servant heard?” The answer was,—“He will

come down." Then David asked,—“Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hands of Saul?” and the Lord said,—“They will deliver thee!” David then arose, and with six hundred men quitted the treacherous city, and sought refuge among the rocky fastnesses of the wilderness of Ziph. Even here he was not safe, as the inhabitants, fearing the fate of Nob, sent messengers to Saul, offering to deliver him into his hands.

Now, when deserted and betrayed at every hand, one star alone lightened the gloom by which David was surrounded. Jonathan, his friend, true to the wanderer, came to offer him the consolations of friendship, and renew the league which they had sworn before God. Fearing his confidence would fail, Jonathan bade him trust still in the Lord, who would deliver him from Saul, and lead him to a haven of rest. The presence of Jonathan was a sweet cordial to the fainting heart of David, and, in scripture phrase, strengthened his hand in God. Their covenant was renewed before the Lord in the presence of the priest Abiathar, and then David and Jonathan parted, never to meet more upon the earth.

We behold now David flying from one desert and wilderness to another, closely pursued by his untiring enemy. In the wilderness of Maon he was driven so hard that it seemed impossible to escape, but the persecuted son of Jesse eluded his persevering foe for some time. At last he became entangled in a rocky pass, and Saul, exulting in the belief that his hated rival was in his power, was just giving the order for a general attack and slaughter, when, lo, a messenger rushes into the camp!—"Haste thee," he cries to Saul, "the Philistines have invaded the land, and are slaying and destroying all before them. Reluctantly was Saul forced to delay the pursuit of David and turn to drive back a foe of far greater importance.

Thankful for this timely interposition of Providence, David escaped with his men, and secreted himself in the cave of En-gedi, among the desert crags of the Dead Sea. Here, surrounded by lonely wilds and gloomy cliffs, accessible only to the wild goat, it might well be supposed the heart of this desolate young man would faint within him, and in tears and complaints he would give utterance to his despair.

Not so the chosen of God,—for in the 63d psalm, supposed to have been written at this time, we find him praising God for his “loving kindness better than life.” He also says,—“My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.” His night watches were spent in meditation upon God, who had so far rescued him and who would still preserve him while, he predicts, his enemies shall fall by the sword.

Into these fastnesses did Saul follow David, with a perseverance caused by the deadly enmity felt by the wicked for the virtuous. David and his men watched Saul as with a picked band of three thousand men he followed them from one retreat to another. At last, when they came very near, David and some of his followers concealed themselves in a cave. While the men of Saul had halted for their noon-day repast, Saul looked around for a shelter from the heat of the sun, and to the surprise of David’s party entered the cave where they were hidden. In silence they remained at the end of the cavern until Saul had laid himself down and had fallen asleep. It was whispered to David by some of those near him to arise and slay his enemy, whom

God had so manifestly led into the toils. But David with indignation answered,—“The Lord forbid that I should stretch my hand forth against my master, the Lord’s anointed!”

Willing that Saul should know of his forbearance, and thus think more favorably of him, he advanced quietly towards him, and cut off the skirt of his robe. When he had safely retreated again, his tender conscience reproached him for putting this indignity upon his anointed king. Why should he molest this unhappy man, he thought, whose days were soon to draw to a close, and whose throne he should in time ascend. Saul soon after arose and left the cave. He heard a voice behind him, crying,—“My Lord the King!” and what was his astonishment when he turned and beheld David prostrated before him in humble reverence, “Wherefore doest thou listen to false charges against me, saying David seeketh thy hurt,” said David. “Behold I and my men were in the cave whilst thou slept, and many bade me kill thee, as the Lord had delivered thee into my hand, but I spared thee, and forebore to put forth my hand against the Lord’s anointed.” While Saul in

DAVID CUTTING OFF SAUL'S SKIRT.—Page 92.





almost stupefaction gazed upon him, David continued,—“Moreover, my father, behold the skirt of thy robe in my hand which I cut off but killed thee not, and judge if I harbor evil against thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, wickedness cometh from the wicked, and my hand shall not be upon thee, and yet thou huntest my life to take it. After whom is the king of Israel come forth? After a dead dog? The Lord judge between thee and me, and plead my cause and deliver me out of thy hand!”

At the sight of the pure, innocent countenance of David, whom he had once “loved so well,” and the severed robe which taught him David might have slain him and did not; the heart of Saul reproached him for his relentless enmity. He felt a consciousness of the truth of his young son-in-law, and shame for his own conduct overcame him.—“Is this indeed thy voice, my son David,” exclaimed Saul, and lifting up his voice he wept, “Thou art more righteous than I, David,” he added, “for thou hast rewarded me good for the evil I have done thee. Well I know no enemy of mine would have spared me as thou hast this day, wherefore the

him and David's messengers, hastened to Abigail, his mistress, ever a peacemaker.

"Behold," he said to her, "David sent messengers to salute our master, and he railed at them. Now these men deserved not this as they have never hurt us, but rather have been a protection from the plundering Arabs. Our master is such a man of Belial that a man cannot speak to him without being rudely answered. Now consider what thou wilt do, for these men will not submit in quiet to insult;"

Abigail, fearing the revenge of David's men, made haste and sought his camp, not giving herself time to consult her husband, lest David should arrive and attack them before he heard her apology; and because she feared Nabal's obstinate refusal which would lead to his destruction. Abigail rode upon an ass, and before her was a train of asses bearing bread, wine, sheep, corn, raisins, and figs. Abigail beheld David and his band approaching, and she hasted and lighted off the ass, and fell before David and bowed herself to the ground. "Upon me, my Lord," she said, "let this iniquity be; but let thy handmaid, I pray thee, have an audience.

Regard not the conduct of Nabal, and let not my Lord's hand be stained with blood, lest when he come to the kingdom,—as we know thou shalt be ruler in Israel—thou shalt then feel grief that thou hast shed blood causelessly. Now then receive this which thy handmaid hath brought, and let it be given unto thy young men. So may the soul of my lord be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies slung out, as out of the middle of a sling." David, gratified by the supplies which Abigail brought, and pleased by her beauty and submission, replied to her,—
"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me. And blessed be thou which has kept me this day from shedding blood, and avenging myself with mine own hand." David then received her offering and bade her farewell, saying,—
"Go now up in peace to thy house: I have hearkened to thy prayer, and thou hast found acceptance with me."

When Abigail returned she sought her husband to inform him of all that had passed. He, however, was in the midst of a great entertainment which he had given, and was too drunk

to hear her. The next morning she told him, and being weakened by debauch he was struck with fright at the narrow escape he had experienced, and fear of the future. He gradually declined after this and died in ten days.

David now saw the Lord had avenged him better than he could himself and blessed his God who had kept him from evil. After a due time David, who had been much charmed with Abigail, and felt he owed a great deal to her intervention, sent to demand her as his wife.

Abigail knew David was the true king of Israel, who would reign when Saul died, and she was overcome with the great honor intended her. She arose and bowed herself to the earth before the messengers, and said,—“Behold let my lord’s handmaid be as a servant unto him!”

With five female attendants Abigail rode with the messengers to David, and she became his wife. His first wife had been taken from him by Saul, and given in marriage to Phalti, as was said above. Since that time he had married Ahinoam who belonged to his own tribe. The custom of taking many wives prevailed then, as it does now, in those eastern countries.

Repose and domestic happiness were, however, not long to be the lot of David. His scouts, soon after his marriage, gave him notice that Saul with a band of chosen men was again marching towards him. David could scarcely believe the king should again listen to his bad advisers, and seek his life. He resolved to go and observe his movements himself, and turning to those around him, asked,—“Who will go down with me to the camp of Saul?” “I will go down with thee,” answered readily, Abishai, the son of his sister Zeruiah. Accordingly the two sat out by night, and arrived at a spot where, from the rocks, they could look down upon the camp. All were bound in sleep; Saul, in the midst, lay in his chariot with his javelin, the insignia of royalty, stuck in the ground at his head,—an indication to David where he might be found.

Sadness stole over the heart of David, as he looked upon one to whom he was ever bound in ties of love. He grieved that the father of Jonathan and Michal, instead of returning his affection, came out against him as if he were a bandit. There lay also many he had known, and once had loved him, now probably looking upon him

as a malefactor. Indignation filled the soul of Abishai, his nephew. "God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hand;" he said to David, "now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with my spear to the earth once, and I will not smite him a second time, I promise thee." "Destroy him not, Abishai!" David replied, "for no one can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless!" When Abishai murmured, David said, "Nay, Abishai, as the Lord liveth the Lord shall smite him. His day shall come,—he shall descend into battle and perish! Content thee with taking the spear and cruse of water at his head, and let us go."

David then crept cautiously and silently down, and threading the ranks of sleepers who felt too much contempt for him to fear an attack, took from the head of Saul his spear and cruse of water. Retreating to the precipice which overhung the camp, he cried with a loud voice, "Abner, son of Ner, answerest not thou?" "Who art thou that crieth in the king's presence," Abner answered.

"Art thou not a valiant man?" cried David,

jeeringly. "Who has greater power than thee in Israel? Wherefore then keepest thou not better guard over thy king? There has been one in the camp who might have destroyed him." The people began to awake, and looked up amazed, when David, calling to them, said,—
"As the Lord liveth ye are worthy to die, because ye have not guarded your master, the Lord's anointed. Look, where is the king's spear and the cruse of water at his head?" Saul aroused by the noise, looked up and called out, "Is that thy voice, my son David?" "It is my voice, my lord, the king," David replied, "Wherefore doth my lord pursue after his servant? What have I done? Who hath stirred thee up to come again and hunt me like a partridge on the mountains?"

Saul with the deepest hypocrisy, affected to relent,—
"I have sinned," he said. "Return, my son David, for I will do thee no harm, because my life was precious in thy sight to-day. I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." David, however, was not to be deceived, and listened not to the charmer, "charm he never so wisely." He was satisfied with show

ing Saul he harbored no evil intention against him, as he seemed to believe, and planting the spear in the ground cried out,—“Behold the king’s spear! Let one of the young men come over and fetch it. The Lord render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the Lord delivered thee into my hand, and I would not stretch it forth against his anointed. As I have spared thee, may the Lord spare me, and deliver me out of my tribulation!”

The heart of Saul was touched,—“Blessed be thou, my son David!” he cried with emotion, “I know thou shalt reign and prosper in spite of aught I can do to prevent it—Farewell. Go in peace!” This strange interview ended, and Saul turned from his pursuit, while David, still distrusting him, passed over with 600 men to Achish, King of Gath, who gave him the city of Ziklag, which ever after pertained to the kings of Judah.

The Philistines, who had been long preparing to invade the land of the Hebrews with great force, after David had been with them a year and four months, set out with a large army towards their borders. David and his men, in

return for the protection and favor they had found, were required to join the expedition. Unable to refuse, David lingered behind hoping some chance would befall which would prevent the necessity of fighting against his country. The opportunity was soon afforded him by the nobles of Gath, who had been long jealous of him. After much murmuring, one of them boldly demanded of Achish,—“What do these Hebrews here while we march against their land?” “Know you not it is David and his band?” replied the king. “They are at enmity with Saul, and have dwelt peaceably here this year past.” The princes now all joined in demanding the departure of David. “Make this fellow then return to the home you have appointed him,” they said. “He will betray us to his master, and thus gain forgiveness and favor.” Achish felt great friendship for David, and was very unwilling to put this affront upon him, but being forced to do it by his mutinous nobles, he spoke to him thus gently. “David thou knowest I love thee, and thou hast found favor in my sight in thy coming in and going out, nevertheless thou must return, and go in peace to thy home

in Ziklag." "What have I done?" asked David, "And what hast thou found against thy servant, that my lord wilt not trust me to go down with him to fight against the enemies of my Lord." "Thou art good as an angel of God in my sight," replied Achish; "but my nobles favor thee not. The princes of Gath distrust thy faith, and fear thou wilt betray them. Now, therefore, depart in peace." David was rejoiced to turn back, and he with his people departed. Alas, sad was the reception awaiting them. When in sight of Ziklag, the smoke which arose from its ruined walls was all that remained of their home. Messengers soon met them, informing them of the descent of the Amalekites, who had destroyed the city, and returned bearing away the inhabitants captive, among whom were David's two wives. At this terrible news, David and his men lifted up their voices and wept. The sorrows and trials of David seemed never to come to an end; and, had he not trusted with such firm faith that all would work together for good in God's own time, his heart would have died within him. He might well ask himself, as in the 77th Psalm,—“Hath God forgotten to be

gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" But he calls to remembrance his favor to his people of old, when "thou ledest thy people like a flock," and his heart was strengthened. David's men turned in great wrath towards him as being the cause of their absence, and even threatened to stone him; but he beseeched their forbearance until he had inquired of the Lord what they should do in this strait. David having thus calmed his men, called for Abiathar. With his ephod across his breast, the high-priest sacrificed to the Lord, while David, prostrate in prayer, asked if he should pursue and overtake the robbers. The answer was favorable, and he set out. Traces of the invaders were soon found, as, after a short journey, they overtook a man who seemed by his dress to belong to them, but was apparently in a dying state. They gave him some of their food—figs, raisins, and water—which greatly refreshed him.

"To whom belongeth thou?" asked David. "I am a follower of the Amalekites," he replied. "We made an invasion upon the borders of Judea, and burned Ziklag with fire. Being

wounded I was left behind, and have not tasted food or water these three days."

"If I succor thee, wilt thou guide me to those men?" asked David. The young man replied, "Swear unto me that thou wilt neither kill me nor deliver me to my master and I will show the way they went." David promised protection; and, under his guidance, they soon came in sight of the robber band, spread over the green sward feasting in triumph. The attack of David was sudden and successful. All were slain except four hundred young men, who fled upon camels. David thus recovered his wives, and all the other captives, together with his cattle and goods, and great spoil taken from the Amalekites. Two hundred of his men, already fatigued with their march with Achish, were unable to follow David, after the robbers, farther than the brook Besor, where they were found when the conquerors returned. These murmured at the thought of sharing the spoil with them, and said, "Let every man receive his wife and the goods he hath lost, the rest is for the conquerors." "Not so, my brethren," said David. "They have guarded our carts and provisions,

and they shall share what the Lord hath given us. From this day forward, let it be a statute in Israel, that he who goeth down to battle, and he who tarrieth by the stuff, shall fare alike." This was agreed upon, and was ever an ordinance among the Hebrews.

Of David's share of the spoil, he sent presents to his friends in Judea, among whom he had taken refuge in the days of his trouble; to testify his gratitude for their kindness.

The days of Saul were now fast drawing to a close. His unsuccessful pursuit of David convinced him he was protected by God, and Samuel's prophecy would be fulfilled. He returned upon his steps with a heart oppressed by fear and remorse. From the gloom which fell upon him, Saul was aroused by the intelligence that Achish and David were marching upon Israel with a large army. His trembling heart told him these were the messengers of God about to fulfill his doom and place his enemy upon his throne. He sought Zadok, the high priest, whom he had placed in the office when he destroyed Ahimelech. Zadok received no answer, neither by Urim nor Thummim. The evil feelings he

had long indulged took from him all reliance upon virtuous resolution, and Saul cowardly sought the aid of sorcery in his behalf. He had formerly published an edict against all sorcerers and wizards, but he yearned after the counsel and advice of Samuel, and determined to resort to those who were said to raise the dead. Saul, in disguise, with only two followers, at midnight sought the hut of a sorceress, dwelling in Endor, a village at the foot of Mount Gilboa. Leaving his men outside the grove which surrounded the house, Saul soon found himself in the presence of the celebrated Witch of Endor.

"What wouldst thou with me?" she asked, gloomily. "I pray unto thee," replied the king, "to divine for me, by a familiar spirit, and bring up from the dead him whom I shall name unto thee." "Knowest thou not what Saul hath done?" she asked. "He hath banished those who have familiar spirits from the land; wherefore then, comest thou to lay a snare for my life?" "As the Lord liveth!" swore Saul, "there shall no punishment happen to thee for this!" "Whom then shall I bring up to thee?" "Bring me up Samuel!" exclaimed the impious

king. The woman accordingly began her usual incantations, after which she intended to deceive Saul by a false image of Samuel; what then was her horror when she saw the earth open, and looking down beheld one rising as if from the dead, coming at her call. If this were indeed Samuel, she felt convinced none but the king would summon him forth. Uttering a wild shriek, she cried,—“Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul!” “Be not afraid,” said the king. “What sawest thou.” “I saw one like the Gods, ascending from the earth,” she replied in terror. “What form is he of?” “An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle?” To the astonishment of Saul, Samuel now really appeared before him wrapped in his priestly robes, and the king overpowered with awe sank prostrate upon the ground.

“Why has thou disquieted me, and brought me up from the grave?” asked the mysterious figure in a solemn voice. “Alas, I am sore distressed,” replied the trembling king. “God hath departed from me,—he answereth no more, neither by prophets nor by visions; therefore have I called thee that thou mayst counsel me.”

“Wherefore dost thou ask me, if the Lord hath departed from thee?” said the prophet. “There is no longer hope for thee, for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thy hand and given it to David. He hath done this because thou obeyedst not his voice. Hear thy doom,—the Lord will deliver thy strong men into the hand of the Philistines, and to-morrow shalt thy sons and thee be like me, with the dead!”

This dreadful message delivered, the shadowy form departed, and Saul fell prostrate along the ground insensible. The woman approached, and reverently prayed the king to be comforted, and to take some refreshment to bring back his strength again. “Nay,” said the unhappy man, “I will not eat.” Yielding, however, to the entreaties of his servants, who now entered, Saul took some refreshment and departed.

Commentators all differ regarding the true explanation of the above extraordinary event. The reader must decide according to the light which is granted him, whether this was a delusion of the woman, or of Satan, or the prophet himself was permitted by God to arise from the tomb, where he laid awaiting the resurrection

morn; to deliver to Saul the solemn message he had received.

Meanwhile the war raged madly in Israel, and Saul, the king, was fighting his last battle. In vain were the bands of the Philistines destroyed;—for again they came on in larger masses, and pressed sore upon the Israelites. Saul was obliged to retreat to the foot of Mount Gilboa. Surrounded by a small party of faithful followers and by his sons, he was forced back into the mountain forests. Here shot at by the archers, Saul, with the distress of a king, saw his people slain around him, and with the agony of a father beheld his sons struck by the enemy one by one before him. Jonathan the beautiful and the good,—Abinadab, and Malchi-Shua, all were dead. Then Saul fled into the mountain fastnesses, where he found himself alone with his armor-bearer, while the yell of his pursuers was heard nearer and nearer.

“I am wounded,” he said, “and can battle no longer. Slay me, I pray thee, lest I fall alive into my enemy’s power. When the armor-bearer, in sore affright, hesitated from such a deed, the unhappy king in anguish of spirit fell

upon his sword and died. His example was followed by his armor-bearer.

Thus perished the first monarch of Israel, after a disastrous reign of twenty years in the prime of life.

Yes, here lay a mark for the archers, deserted of God and the prophets, the man so desired by the Hebrews, as one who was to lead them to power and happiness.

Was the nation more prosperous for a monarchy?—was Saul or the people happier? Let the sad history of Saul answer; and teach all who read it contentment and submission to God.



SIMEON ANOINTING DAVID.—Page 113.



David.

THE former part of the life of David has already been told in the history of Saul. We find him first a gentle shepherd boy, who, when anointed by the prophet Samuel as king, and strengthened in the inner-man with might from the Lord, becomes a noble and a great warrior. Although heir of the monarchy, he took no steps towards assuming kingly power, and ever avoided encounter with Saul, lest he should injure him; thus with much faith waiting God's time to draw him from the pit in which he was plunged. That time had now arrived. The sun of Saul was set, and all men prepared to hail the rising glory of David.

Encamped with his men near Ziklag, David was sitting in his tent anxiously awaiting news from the army. Suddenly a man ran into the camp, with his clothes rent, and earth strewed upon his head in token of mourning. He

prostrated himself at David's feet. "Whence comest thou?" asked David. "Out of the camp of Israel I am escaped," he said, breathless. Trembling with emotion, David cried,—“How went the battle? I pray thee tell me quickly.” And he answered,—“The people have fled from the battle, and many are dead; and Saul and Jonathan are dead also!” Great anguish then wrung the heart of David when he heard this dreadful tale; but he subdued it to hear the whole of the man's story. He had found Saul still alive, who prayed him to kill him; this he did, and now brought the royal crown and bracelet to David as corroboration of his truth. Then David and those around him, in accordance with their custom of giving outward manifestation of the grief which was rending their hearts, tore their linen dresses, threw ashes upon their heads, and, seated upon the ground, wept and fasted all that day. While in this posture of woe, David lamented with the lamentation over Saul, and Jonathan his early friend, which is found in the second book of Samuel, first chapter.

A. the man who killed Saul had offended the

laws by laying his hand upon the Lord's anointed, he was doomed to death. This also conduced to prevent suspicion of David's participation in the deed.

After inquiring of the Lord, and receiving his approbation, David and his family and followers repaired to Hebron. Here the men of Judah flocked to him, and he was publicly anointed king of Judah. His first inquiry was after the body of his predecessor, that he might give him and his son honorable burial. The men of Jabesh Gilead, he was told, had soon after the battle sought them out, and after burning them buried the ashes under a tree before their city gate. David sent these men his thanks and blessing, and promised them, as king of Judah; his protection and kindness. David as yet was only acknowledged king over Judah; the rest of the tribes were gained over by Abner, who placed Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, over them as king of Israel. For two years both parties remained quiet; at the end of that time, Abner, with a large host, crossed the Jordan, to attack the men of Judah. David sent a band against them headed by Joab, son of his sister Zeruiah. The

two bands met in the beautiful valley of Gibeon, surrounded by mountains, and by the limestone ridge upon which stood that ancient city. Upon each side of a great reservoir formed to supply the city, and called the pool of Gibeon, encamped the two generals. Skirmishes here began in which many fell, until at length the whole host engaged, and the men of Israel were defeated. Abner fled, but was pursued by Asahel, brother of Joab, who was light of foot as a wild roe. Abner twice turned, and bade Asahel leave the pursuit of him and seek plunder from some of the dead, or he should be obliged to slay him. The young man, ambitious of taking so great a prize, heeded him not, until at length Abner turned again and smote him with a spear. Joab and Abishai still pursued Abner, whom they found upon a hill surrounded by a band of Ephraimites who had joined him. Seeing him so well intrenched, Joab sounded a retreat. He took up his brother, whom he buried in the family sepulchre at Bethlehem, and then returned to David, having lost nineteen men and slain three hundred and sixty Israelites.

The kingdom of Israel, however, was not to

stand, for the Lord had declared David king, and the counsels of the wicked must come to nought. Ish-bosheth quarrelled with Abner, and the haughty man, brooking no reproof, immediately deserted the son of Saul and went over to David. All Israel followed his example, leaving the wretched Ish-bosheth with a slender band of followers. Two of these, mistaking David's character, thought to please him by destroying his rival, and while Ish-bosheth slept they murdered him and brought his head to David. "Behold," said they, "the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, thine enemy, which sought thy life; the Lord hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his seed." The grief and anger of David at this outrage was great. Turning to the men, he said, severely,—"When one told me he had slain Saul, thinking to bring me good tidings, I took and slew him; therefore, as the Lord liveth who hath redeemed my soul, I shall require of you the blood of this man whom you have slain in his house upon his bed!"

The men were executed, and the head of Ish-

bosheth placed in the sepulchre of Abner at Hebron.

Abner had sued to be taken into favor with David, who would listen to no negotiation unless Abner first brought him Michal his first and dearly beloved wife. Saul had given her in marriage to Phaltiel, who now was forced to surrender her. He truly loved Michal and followed her weeping until near to Hebron, but as she was to be the price of peace, and cement of the treaty between himself and David, Abner commanded him to return, which he did sorrowing. Abner next undertook to gain over to David, that part of Israel who were still under arms for the party of Saul. He accordingly left the city just as Joab entered at another side, bringing spoils from a troupe whom he had conquered. The earth is full of mischievous people who delight in trouble and confusion. Some of these hastened to Joab, with the news that Abner had been received graciously by David, and being a great general would no doubt supersede him. Joab was fired with rage that the murderer of his brother Asahel and a daring rebel should be thus received. Forgetting the respect due

to his king, he burst into David's presence crying,—“What hast thou done? Can it be that Abner the traitor has been allowed entrance into thy palace, and has gone in peace! Knowest thou not he is a spy?”

When David refused to answer these insolent questions, the fierce man, bent upon revenge, sent a band of his followers after Abner with a message as from David praying his return. At a well outside the city gates, Abner, upon his return, found Joab and his brother Abishai. Not dreaming of evil, Abner suffered himself to be drawn aside by them, when Joab, exclaiming, “this for the blood of Asahel,” smote him in the fifth rib, and he died there.

In full court was the king informed of this cruel deed, and his grief and horror were so great that he arose, and, lifting his hand to heaven, said,—“I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord from the blood of Abner the son of Ner. Let it rest upon Joab and upon his father's house, and may sickness and sorrow always pursue them for this.” He then gave orders for a great funeral, and said to Joab and those around him,—“Rend your clothes

and gird you with sack-cloth and mourn for Abner."

When the time was come, the body was laid upon an ivory bier covered with purple cloth, and followed by mourners, by David and a great body of people. It was carried to a sepulchre near the city. When it was laid within, the king lifted up his voice and wept for Abner, and all the people accompanied him with tears and mournful cries. David then delivered a lament, or funeral oration, over Abner: "Died Abner for any folly or guilt?" he said, "no—thy hands were not bound as a criminal, nor thy feet in fetters as a malefactor,—there was nothing charged against thee; as a man falleth before a wicked man so fellest thou!" And David and all the people wept again over him.

When the king returned to the palace, he and his family sat down and mourned in sack-cloth for Abner. Food was brought, of which they all partook, but when it was presented to David he rejected it, saying,—“May God send every evil upon me if I taste bread or aught else till the sun be down!” When again pressed, he refused, saying,—“Know you not there is a

prince and great man fallen in Israel this day? Abner was son of Saul's uncle, and cousin to a king, moreover he was a man of talent whom I could ill spare now. And yet these men I cannot punish, anointed king though I be, for they have great power with the soldiers. The time, however, will come when I can punish Joab."

This public grief took away all suspicion that David had connived at the death of Abner, and the people were pleased with their king. The elders of Israel joined him afterwards, and he was anointed king over all the country.

The next great event in the life of David is the building of the city of Jerusalem. Upon the confines of Judah and Benjamin, there stood a hill with three round summits in the midst of a stony and hilly country. Deep, narrow valleys, in the midst of which ran pure streams of water, surrounded this hill upon three sides, while the forests opened upon a stony plain. Upon Mount Moriah, one of these hills, one of the first scenes of this great history was enacted. Here was Abraham's son bound for the sacrifice; type of that great sacrifice of one of Abraham's seed, by which he was promised all the nations

of the earth should be blessed. Another hill was occupied by the Jebusites whom the Israelites had never yet conquered. It was to this mountain, upon which Abraham had promised the Lord would provide everything needful for his people,—that David was divinely led to plant the seat of his power and of his religion. David took the city, and the hill-fort on the top of Mount Zion, and here he built a large city called after himself, the city of David.

Behold David now at the height of his power. All Israel acknowledged his dominion, and the nations were awed into peace. His treasures increased, the country prospered, and all was peace around him. He possessed a large army commanded by Joab, an able general, and a numerous family of wives and children dwelt within his palace. He was, moreover, in the prime of life, for David only numbered thirty years. Then his heart bursting with joy and gratitude spoke forth the 101st Psalm; beginning—

I will sing of mercy and judgment:
Unto thee O Lord will I sing.

The wives of David were,—Michal, daughter of Saul; Ahinoam, the Jezreelitess; Abigail, widow of Nabal; Maach, daughter of the king Geshur; Haggith, Abital, and Eglah. In taking so many wives David only followed the custom of the country in which he lived. It was permitted by God for some good and wise purpose. Afterwards he married others and took several concubines. He had also seventeen sons. David, by his wisdom and prosperity, had gained the respect of Hiram, the king of Tyre, who sent him a friendly deputation, and a present of some of his workmen, as the Tyrians were skillful in every kind of work. David, with their help, built a stately palace made of Lebanon cedar, the walls of which were adorned with exquisite carving of the same, and hung with tapestry dyed with Tyrian scarlet. The Philistines became alarmed at the growing power of David, and attacked the country twice, but by the Lord's help they were both times defeated. Peace being again restored, David turned his thought towards erecting an altar to that God who had been his protector in evil, by whose

right hand he ever acknowledged he had gained every victory.

The Ark of the Covenant had been fifty years at Kirjath-Baale, where it had been sent after it was recovered from the Philistines whom God permitted to take it, in order to punish the high-priest Eli, and his wicked sons.

David with much state and solemnity, surrounded by thousands of the greatest men of the land, set out to fetch the ark to Jerusalem.

This sacred ark was three feet nine inches long—made of choice wood and covered inside and out with plates of gold. It was surrounded on the summit with a railing of the same precious metal, while two cherubim with outstretched arms stood over it. In it were the tables of the law, Aaron's rod, and a pot of manna. This was placed upon a cart, and drawn by oxen, as horses were not used in Judah. As it was shaken by the oxen, Uzzah, one of the conductors, stretched out his hand to keep it from falling, when, to the surprise and horror of all, he was immediately struck dead. This event was doubtless caused by God, to impress the

nation with the sacredness of this ark, which, perhaps, its long absence may have rendered necessary.

David was so much distressed at this event, that he feared God did not approve the ark's removal, and he left it in the care of Obed-edom, a Levite, who resided near.

The ark caused a blessing to rest upon the house of Obed, and he and his prospered greatly.

This re-assured David, and at the end of three months he again set forth with great state to bring the ark. Everything was now arranged in the most solemn manner. Instead of oxen, Levites were commanded to carry it, which they bore by the golden staves put through large rings in the side. When they had gone six steps, sacrifices were offered upon an altar. Again they went onward with shouting and music and sound of trumpets, cimbals, psalter, and harp, and dancing. David, wearing the linen ephod of a priest and clothed in a white linen robe, went before the ark singing and dancing in the joy of his heart.

Thus they entered Jerusalem, and thus were they beheld by Michal, who, inheriting the

haughtiness of her father Saul, thought the behavior of David lessened his dignity, and despised him in her heart.

David had prepared curtains, which, in the form of the first tabernacle, surrounded the ark; and here, with much joy, was the sacred coffer placed. Burnt-offerings and peace offerings were offered, and then the feasting began. To the multitude who were gathered upon this joyful occasion were distributed a cake of bread, a piece of flesh, and flagon of wine each,—they were then blessed by David and dismissed to their homes.

The 2d, 9th, and 24th Psalms were supposed to have been composed by the royal psalmist upon this great event. In the first he says,—

Yet have I set my king upon my
Holy hill of Zion.

In the second,—

That I may show forth all thy praise,
In the gates of the daughter of Zion.

The third has those splendid verses commencing:

Lift up your heads O ye gates,
And the King of Glory shall come in.

How glorious does David now appear, who, elevated to so high a post of honor as king over the land, possessed of wealth and power and prosperity, and yet not lifted up by pride, but acknowledging all as given by God. When firmly seated in his kingdom, his first thought was that "he and his house would serve the Lord." Accordingly a tabernacle was erected, and the Ark, and the Law were set up for reverence and worship. When the services were all over, David returned to bless his household and family. Here he was met by the proud Michal, who exclaimed, jeeringly,—“How glorious did the king of Israel appear this day, his robes of state laid aside, and a priest’s ephod in their place, dancing among the common people!” David with a well-timed rebuke, replied,—“It was before the Lord that I thus humbled myself,—He who chose me for king in place of thy father and his house. I cannot appear too lowly in his sight.” The heart of David was thus weaned from Michal, and he never saw her more. This was doubtless the Lord’s doings, that there might not be any descendant of Saul to disturb the country by seditions.

David's house, by the assistance of his Tyrian workmen, was now all finished, and while inspecting and admiring it, he conceived the purpose of building a temple to the Lord. A holy man dwelt with David, and he was consulted by the king. Nathan, without consulting the Lord, pronounced the plan a wise one, and commended David for it. This was not, however, to be David's privilege, as probably the country was not settled enough for such an undertaking. Accordingly a vision came to him in the night, and endued him with a spirit of prophecy, and bade him "Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house since I brought the children of Israel out of Egypt until this day." That the king might not be disheartened, and think the prohibition arose from the Lord's disapprobation, the prophet was to remind him of all the favors granted him formerly, from the time he was taken out of the sheep-cote until placed upon a throne. He was farther promised that the Lord would establish his house or family upon the throne for ever, and one of his seed

should have the honor of building a temple to the Lord.

With a heart full of gratitude David went to the tabernacle, and there uttered a thanksgiving for all the honors promised him and his house, and humbled himself before the Lord as not worthy of all he had received, and of all that was promised. The warrior king was again called upon to go to battle, as his enemies were pressing upon the border of the kingdom. The Philistines were the first defeated, and after them the Moabites, and afterwards Hadadezer, king of part of Syria. By the defeat of the latter, David extended the borders of Israel to the river Euphrates, and gained great spoil in gold shields, brass, chariots and horses. The metals were laid up in the tabernacle to be used in erecting a temple. Of the horses, David only kept four hundred for his own use, in which act, the pride of his heart had led him to forget an express command of God, who, by Moses forbade the Hebrews to possess horses, lest they should be led to seek conquests abroad, and neglect their own border. Edom also was subdued, and David

placed garrisons in the place, and returned home triumphant.

He returned, and again ordered his court and kingdom with much justice and judgment. Joab was placed as general over the army; Zadok and Ahimelech were priests; Seraiah, was secretary of State; Benaiah was captain of the body-guard; and to the sons of David was given great offices of State. While thus arranging his officers, David remembered the last possessor of his throne, and inquired of his courtiers if any of Saul's posterity were alive, that for Jonathan's sake he might do them a service. All that he learned was that there was one of Saul's servants named Ziba who lived near the city. He was sent for, and brought before the king, who asked him,—“Art thou Ziba, servant of Saul?” “Thy servant is he,” answered the man. And the king said, “Is there none of the house of Saul remaining, that I may show the kindness of God to him?” “Jonathan has a son alive who is lame,” Ziba replied, “for when Saul was dead, his nurse fled with him, and fell and lamed him.” “Where is he?”

“Behold he dwells in Lo-debar with his mother’s relations for he is poor.” David’s messengers were sent with Ziba to fetch the young man, who arrived, and with much terror, lest his death was determined, prostrated himself at the feet of the king. David gazed upon him with great emotion,—“Fear not,” he said, “I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul, and give thee a seat at the royal table.” Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, bowed himself in gratitude, and said, humbly.—“What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon one who is low in estate and worthless as a dead dog!” David bade him arise and calling Ziba said,—“I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul. Thou, therefore, with thy sons and servants shall make his retinue, and till his lands for him, and bring him the profits.”

Then said Ziba to the king,—“According to all that the lord my king hath commanded his servant, that shall his servant do.

Accordingly, Ziba, with fifteen sons and twenty servants, entered the service of Mephibosheth, who, with his young son, were received

at the king's table, and obtained the same honors as the king's son.

In this year died Nahash the king of Ammon, and his son Hanun ascended the throne. During the troubles of David Nahash had kindly sheltered him, and now he wished, in return for this, to show some attention to his son. Messengers were accordingly sent to Ammon. In the mean time, the nobles who had been alarmed at the great victories acquired over the surrounding nations by David, mistrusted the object of this embassy, and persuaded the young king it was sent with the intention of spying out the land to destroy them. Hanun believed his courtiers, and the messengers of David were received with insult, their flowing robes cut off to the skirt, and half their beards were shaved away. Cutting or injuring the beard was considered as the greatest indignity which could be offered to a man, as it was only done in mourning or in slavery. The messengers stopped at the ruins of Jericho, where they took shelter in a few cottages near, and sent to David, as they were ashamed to appear in this degraded manner. The answer of David was,—“Tarry at

Jericho until your beards are grown, and then return."

This insult must be avenged, and David sent a host of the greatest warriors of the land, commanded by Joab, to the borders of Ammon. The Ammonites had collected a vast army, by sending for men to Syria, to the king of Maacah, and to Ish-tob. Joab, when he came in sight of the city of Medeba, beheld the Ammonites issuing forth from the gates while their allies were stationed where they could attack the Israelites on the rear. To compass these two hosts, Joab divided his army into two parts, giving the command of those who were to receive the Ammonites to his brother Abishai, while he, with his band, faced the Syrians. When all was ready he addressed the assembled army in the following words, which are said to be as fine as any military address, ancient or modern: Soldiers! if the Syrians be too strong for me then ye shall help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for you then I will come and help you. Be of good courage, and let us quit ourselves like men for our peo-

ple and the city of our God:—and the Lord do that which seemeth to him good!”

Joab attacked and defeated the Syrians, which so terrified the Ammonites that they fled into their city and shut the gates. The Syrians, joined by a large reinforcement, assembled again soon after, but were attacked by David in person, and so thoroughly conquered that they made a treaty of peace with the Israelites. David once more returned victorious to his city.

We behold the king of the Hebrews now at the height of his glory. In the course of twenty years he had terminated advantageously eight wars—his country was in peace, and prosperity shone over the land. He had acquired great wealth, and his name was renowned in all the neighboring nations. He had nothing to do now but to enjoy the wealth and the luxury with which he was surrounded. Is this situation good for man? Will not Pride assail him—will not luxury and indolence become sweet, and thus lay the foundation for sensuality, under whose assaults will not honor and even piety succumb? If David was raised up partly that

his spiritual hymns might be the instruction and the comfort of after-ages, and if the gift of prophecy was given him that he might foretell of Christ; was not he permitted to stumble that the great truth of man's fallen and inwardly depraved nature might not be lost sight of. The highest and the purest, if he relax one moment from his watchfulness, will feel the sting of his own wicked heart. Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall! We enter now into the dark passages of David's life.

A year had David passed in ease and quiet when the Ammonites again burst upon the borders. The king, unwilling to quit the delights of his home, sent Joab forth, and with him went Uriah, the Hittite, a famous warrior of Israel.

The sun had set, the heat of the day was past, and David indolently reposed upon the cushions which were spread for him, according to Eastern custom, upon the flat roof of his house. Here, as the soft breezes blew over him, he gazed out upon the mountains that stand around Jerusalem, upon the shining Dead Sea, and the dark hills of Moab which rise beyond. His eye then

glances down over the city which lay sloping at his feet, and at length rests with emotion upon a shadowy garden near his palace. There, in a fountain, he beheld a beautiful woman bathing. Doubtless she knew the palace overlooked her retreat, and most probably hoped to attract the eye of the king. But it did not lessen David's sin that he was tempted. If he had then turned his eyes away; if he had dismissed from his heart the feelings which were gathering there, and prayed to be delivered from temptation, all would have been well, and he would have been saved! David did not do thus. He continued to contemplate the fatal beauty which was to lure him to destruction; and even afterwards asked who she was. Satan arranged everything smoothly for him, the husband of Bathsheba was Uriah, who was absent at the war, and David thus saw a chance of secretly sinning. He sent for Bathsheba, and she came, as willing as himself, to sin against her husband. When the consequences of this interview began to appear, David became alarmed, for he feared public shame, and even, perhaps, death, for one or both of them, as that was the punishment

awarded to his sin by law. By a cunning stratagem he hoped to shield himself. Uriah was sent for from the war, upon pretence of inquiring how the battle sped. Uriah came; and after answering all the questions of David, he was told by the king to go to his house and refresh himself. The next morning it was told to David that Uriah slept in one of the courts of the palace among the soldiers. He was called before the king. "Camest thou not from a journey?" David asked, "why then didst thou not go down to thy house, rest and refresh thyself?" "My lord, Joab and my fellow-soldiers are encamped in the open field," said the noble Uriah, "and the Ark of the Lord remains in curtains; shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and lie with my wife? As thou livest, and as my soul liveth, I will not do this thing!" David now began to find himself entangled in the nets of wickedness, and he must resort to every mean shift to conceal his crime. Uriah was detained another day, and induced to drink much wine, but still he slept in the king's court. Probably the noble soldier had at first acted from the generous impulse of his heart, but now

he doubtless felt suspicion, or the truth might have been told him, as such transactions could not be kept secret, and he would not consent to be a party to his own dishonor. With a sinner the downward course is rapid—another crime must be committed to conceal the first. What now must the sinning David do. The death of Uriah would conceal all, but this he was not yet wicked enough to do in cold blood. What if he died in battle? his name would then be celebrated as a hero who fell in the service of his king and country. Unhappy David! Thus did he gloss over, to his conscience, the murderous design with which he sent a letter to Joab, commanding him to place Uriah in a dangerous post at the front of the battle, and thus let him die. This command Joab basely obeyed. The unfortunate man was the bearer of that letter. He was given a post of honor while storming the city, and there Uriah fell a sacrifice to the passions of his king. After the prescribed time of mourning David took Bathsheba to wife.

How closely does this story proclaim the truth of Scripture history. Were the life of David a creation of man, would the glorious hero be

allowed thus to fall and become the contempt of his readers? Rather would he have been represented incorruptible and god-like to the end.

If David's crimes were unknown to man, they were beheld by an angry God. The sorrows of his after-life may be dated from this sinful period, for it is not possible for a man, however repentant or pious he may be, to live the peaceful life he once did before he had been tempted to sin. One day when David had retired to a private apartment where he was uttering his repentance and sorrow upon his harp, Nathan the prophet stood before him. He was wrapped in his white robe, and his long beard covered all his face except the eyes, which were fixed severely upon the king. "What wouldst thou, Nathan?" asked the king, while an inward tremor shook him. "I come to submit a case to my lord, the king, and to ask his justice upon an offender." "Thou shall have it,—speak."

"There were two men dwelling in a certain city;" said the prophet, "the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb which he had brought

up and nourished. It grew up among his children as one of them, and did eat of his own meat, and drank of his cup, and was unto him as a child. There came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own herd to dress for the wayfarer, but took the poor man's lamb and gave it for food to his guest." David's anger was kindled that any man dare be so unjust in his dominions. "As the Lord liveth!" he said, "the man deserves to die. But according to our law let him restore fourfold because he had no pity!" Then Nathan said to David,—"Thou art the man!" As if he heard the words of an angry God pronouncing his doom, the king fell prostrate before the prophet, overcome with the terror of his conscience.

The Prophet continued,—“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel,—I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul: and I gave thee thy master's house and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and if that had not been enough I should have given thee more. Wherefore then hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite!



NATHAN REPROVING DAVID.—Page 141.

thou hast slain him by the sword of Ammon, and taken his wife to be thy wife! Now, therefore, because thou hast despised me, the sword shall never depart from thy house! I will raise up evil against thee from thine own house, I will take away thy wives, and another shall lay with them in the light of the sun! Thou didst this secretly, but I will cause it to be done to thee before all Israel, that men may know I am the Lord, the Avenger!" David who had lain prostrate, his eyes shedding torrents of penitential tears, now exclaimed,—“I have sinned indeed against the Lord!” “The Lord will not punish thy crime with death,” the Prophet said, “for he has promised the throne to thee and to thy house, but, because thou hast caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child that Uriah’s wife has born to thee shall die.” The Prophet departed, and the miserable king, now first tasting of the bitterness of sin, sought the apartments of his children. Here the wail of woe met his ear, the first fulfillment of that doom of shame, and blood and sorrow which had just been pronounced over him. The child of Bathsheba was dying. David, clothed in a mourning

garment of black goat's hair, his head strewed with ashes, lay upon the floor fasting and groaning in spirit. In vain the elders sought him, entreated him to arise and eat; the king remained upon the ground praying for the child. Seven days thus passed, and then the child died. All feared to tell the king of its death, dreading the consequences to him of a calamity the contemplation of which so shook him.

David saw them whispering at the door and divined the cause. "Is the child dead?" he asked. And they said,—“He is dead.” Then David, to the surprise of all, arose from the earth, bathed, anointed himself, and changed his apparel. He then went into the tabernacle, worshipped, and returning to his own house asked for bread, and ate.

Some of those most familiar with the king ventured to express their surprise at his greater grief while the child was ill, than when it was dead. David answered,—“While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, hoping that God might yet be gracious to me and spare the child. But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast?

Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Oh blessed words of David,—foundation of the bereaved one's hope, and soother of woes which death inflicts!

In the 51st Psalm, David breathed out the penitence of his broken and contrite spirit. His repentance was accepted. Another son was given him, born of Bathsheba, whom David named Solomon, which means peaceful, as token that all was at peace between him and his Lord; to which Nathan added Jedidiah, Beloved of the Lord, for God loved Solomon. David afterwards joined his general, Joab, before Rabbah the royal city of Ammon. It was taken and spoiled, and the conquered people were made to work for the Israelites as sawyers and workers in iron and in the brick-kiln; and thus was the pride of Ammon quenched.

The first of the predictions of Nathan the Prophet had been fulfilled, and now we are to behold another and more dreadful enactment of that evil in his own house, which he had been foreshown as his punishment. David, by his wife Maacah had twins, a fair young girl named

Tamar, and Absalom a beautiful young man, with long flowing hair. Amnon, another son of David, by Ahinoam, saw his lovely half-sister and loved her. His feelings preyed upon him so as to produce illness, which Jonadab, his cousin, seeing, said to him,—“Why art thou, a king’s son, so miserable?” When he knew the cause, the bad man gave him such wicked counsel as led Tamar into his power. When his will had been obtained, he turned the hapless girl adrift, who, with her royal robe of various glowing dyes, embroidered with gold, all torn in sign of mourning, and her dark hair strewed with ashes, rushed into the house of her brother. At this sight, and at the tale of her woes, the wrath of Absalom arose; but the more surely to avenge her, he bade his sister keep retired in his house, where “she remained, desolate.” David was wroth with Amnon, but more grieved for himself, for now he saw how his lust was punished by the same crime in his household.

Two years did Absalom nurse his wrath before he found a fitting opportunity of gratifying it. At last he saw his time. He had purchased

a farm in Baal-hazor, and now, that the time of sheepshearing had come, resolved to have a feast, as is usual at these seasons, during which he could slay his erring brother. He invited the king and all his brothers, particularly Amnon, to go down with him to his feast. The king declined, but the young men went down. "Mark ye, now,"—said Absalom to his servants, "when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you,—Smite Amnon, then kill him! Fear not,—have I not commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant!" The feasting went on with music and mirth when suddenly Absalom arose, "Smite Amnon! he cried—and his brother fell dead. The rest mounted their mules in haste and fled. A terrified servant, the swiftest of all, ran hastily into David's presence, and cried out,—“Absalom hath killed all the king's sons, and there is none of them left!” Jonadab, by whose treacherous advice this tragedy had come to pass, next came in, and found the desolate king lying upon the earth with his garments torn, while around him stood his faithful servants, lamenting with their clothes rent. “Let not my lord suppose all his

sons are dead," he said, coldly, "Amnon alone is slain. It had thus been determined by Absalom from the day his sister Tamar was forced. Let not the king then take it thus to heart,—Amnon has sinned, and he alone is dead. Behold thy other sons approaching." The king's sons now came in, and lifted up their voices and wept; and the king also, and all his servants also wept sore. Absalom fled to his grandfather, the king of Geshur.

This unworthy son was very dear to his father, and David mourned not so much for Amnon dead as for his beautiful young Absalom. Joab had in vain pleaded for the young man, but David was inflexible, thinking it but justice to Amnon that his brother should not be pardoned. At last Joab, who was probably acting for Absalom's friends, devised a cunning scheme to entrap the king and force a pardon for the youth. Accordingly, one day he sent a woman into David's presence clothed in mourning garments of coarse goat's hair, with her hair in disorder, and strewed with ashes. She fell upon her face before the throne, crying,—“Help, O king!” “What aileth thee, woman?” asked

David. And she answered,—“Thy handmaid is a widow, and had two sons,—and they strove together in a field, and there being none to part them, one slew the other. And behold the wife and family of my son, who was slain, have risen and demand the other that they may smite him in return, and thus avenge the fallen; and thus will the light of my family be quenched.” The king answered her,—“Go to thy house and I will give charge concerning thy case.” The woman knew this would not fulfill the views of Joab, and wisely continued the conversation so as to come around the point she wished. “I pray thee,” she said, “let the king not suffer the avenger of blood to destroy my son!” “As the Lord liveth,” answered David, “there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.” Now, then, was the woman’s time to speak for Absalom, and she said,—“Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one more word unto my lord, the king.” “Say on,” replied David, kindly. “Wherefore, then, doth not the king grant to a nation’s prayers what he doth to a poor widow?” said the woman. “Amnon is dead and cannot be recalled, and we must all needs die, and are

as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. God forgiveth the sinner, and as thou art like a minister of God over thy people, then, O lord, the king, if thou forgivest the son of his handmaid, so pardon and bring back thy banished one!" The king, who had sat with his hands covering his face that none might see his tears and agony while his wounds were thus probed, and the picture of his house's tragedy brought thus before him,—now, when the woman had ceased speaking, composed himself, and said to her,—“Conceal not from me, woman, the thing I shall ask thee.” “Let my lord, the king, speak,” the woman tremblingly answered. “Hath not Joab consulted thee in all this?” asked the king. The woman said,—“As thy soul liveth, O king, nothing can be hid from thee. Thy servant Joab put all these words into thy handmaid’s mouth.” Joab and the courtiers, who all loved Absalom, had been, at a distance, interested witnesses of this interview, and now stepped forward, as the king, calling them, said,—“As thou wishest let it be. Go, therefore, and bring the young man. Let

him return to his home, but my face he shall not see again."

Joab, satisfied with gaining so much, bowed to the ground upon his face, and thanked the king that he had found thus grace in his sight.

Absalom returned, and remained two years in Jerusalem without daring to present himself before his angry father. As he was in disgrace, neither Joab nor the courtiers durst visit him. Impatient at last of this weary life, Absalom, despairing of seeing Joab another way, sent his servants to set fire to Joab's barley fields,—a proof of his daring and violent spirit. Joab sought Absalom to expostulate, which was just what the young prince wished, who answered boldly,—“I did it that thou mightst come hither, for I am weary of this life. Wherefore didst thou not let me remain at Geshur if I am thus to live in disgrace. Let me go to the king,—he can but kill me, and death is better than this banishment.” Joab promised to speak once more to his father. David was willing to receive his son, for he loved him well; and when Joab brought him before him, he pardoned him and gave him the kiss of peace.

Absalom, although possessing a beautiful form, was of a base and treacherous nature. He took advantage of the favorable impression created by his noble exterior to gain men's hearts, that he might form a party strong enough to take possession of his father's throne. So great was his pride that he could not submit to be ruled by another, although that other was his own father! He gathered together men and chariots secretly, and affected regal state. Nay, so artful was he that he stationed himself by the palace gate to intercept all who came with petitions; and with a deceitful face of sorrow would tell them they could not obtain justice there. "O that I were made judge in the land," he would exclaim, "that any man who had suit or cause might come to me, and I would do him justice! He would then permit the people to kneel and kiss his hand, and thus stole all men's hearts away.

When everything was ripe, he begged, and obtained permission of the king to go to Hebron, to pay a vow.

At Hebron an army was rapidly gathered, for the Lord was not now on David's side. Even

Ahitophel, the prime minister, joined the rising sun, as he probably was tired of the overgrown power of Joab, the violent and bloody captain-general.

When David heard of his son's hostile approach, he did not offer to resist him, nor did he defend the city. He knew this was the doom of "evil from his own house," which he was to suffer in punishment of his sins, and he resolved to suffer in silence. He did not wish to add to the guilt of Absalom, so he gave orders for all of his faithful friends, who might be obnoxious to his son, to follow him out of the city. David descended from the city to the brook Kidron, where he stood, that all might pass over in safety before him. His bodyguard, consisting of the six hundred men who had been with him in all his early battles, went over first. One of these was Ittai, son of the king of Gath, and him David urged to return in safety to his father's court, and take back with him his countrymen. This faithful friend and follower refused to go. "As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth," he nobly said, "surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or

life, even there also will thy servant be!" David said to Ittai—"Go, and pass over!" And he, with his friends and little ones, passed over. Next approached Za lok and Abiather, priests of the Lord, with the Levites bearing the ark. These also David sent back, lest they should come to damage, or the public service cease in the city. "If the Lord see fit," he said, "I shall return to the city and the ark; but if not, behold, here am I, let him do as it seemeth good unto him!" Then all the people, who looked down from the city, and the masses who clustered along the sides of the hills, wept loudly to see their venerated monarch climbing the hill barefoot, weeping, with his head covered in the guise of a criminal. And all the people who went with him covered their heads and wept also. When David arrived at the summit of the mount of Olives, he sat down and gazed with a sorrowful heart upon the city spread out below him. Sad and bitter must have been the thoughts of the aged king, as he gazed upon the "city of the great king;" when he "marked well her bulwarks," and "considered her palaces," and gazed out to the mountains which stand about

Jerusalem. This city which he had conquered and rebuilt, and which was "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," he was thrust from, and obliged to leave as a fugitive! Yet he bowed himself and worshipped God, and trusted and waited.

Hushai, a wise and prudent man, now came running up to join his king, with his garments torn in token of grief. David begged him to return to the city and submit himself to Absalom, and in concert with the priests, see all that was going forward, and send him word by the sons of Zadok and Abiathar. Ziba, servant of Mephibosheth, son of Saul, now approached, with mules laden with bread, fruit, raisins, and wine, and leading asses saddled for the use of the king and his chiefs. These had doubtless been sent by his master to David, but the faithless servant gave them as from himself, and falsely told David that Mephibosheth remained behind in hopes of seizing upon the throne of his father. At this news David was wroth, and gave to Ziba all the possessions of his master; which doubtless was the hope which originated his treachery. The mournful troop had de-

scended the hill, and passing the plain came to the town of Bahurim. Here the king was met by Shimei, a man of the family of Saul. The sight of the sorrowing David could not stop his venomous tongue, but he assailed the king with curses, and threw stones at him. "Come out, come out of the city of which thou art not worthy, thou bloody man of Belial," he cried. "The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned. Behold thou art taken in thy mischief, and thy kingdom given to Absalom, thou bloody man!" The people of David were indignantly waiting a sign from their king to silence this insolent man, and Abishai, no longer able to contain himself, cried out,—“Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head!” “Nay, let him curse,” said the humbled king. “The Lord hath permitted him to curse me, then wherefore should you hinder him. Behold, even my son who came forth from my bowels, he seeks my life,—all are against me; but let them alone, for the Lord hath bidden them!”

The meekness and resignation of the once

powerful warrior struck pity into the hearts of his companions. They spoke not, however, but in silence marched along, while Shimei pursued them with curses and stones. When out of his power they halted in the desert, struck their tents and awaited news from Jerusalem. After a few weary days, Jonathan and Ahimas, the sons of the priests, were seen speeding upon asses to the camp. "What news, what news," was the cry of all. When they were come into the king's presence, they cried, "Speed thee, O king, across the Jordan! Lodge not this night in the wilderness lest thou and thy people be destroyed!" They then related all that had happened from the entrance of Absalom into Jerusalem. When Absalom and Ahitophel and their party had entered the royal palace, Hushai resolved upon feigning; and so as to serve David the better, appeared before the usurper. Prostrating himself before him, he cried,—“God save the king!” “Is this thy kindness to thy friend?” said Absalom; for traitors are seldom agreeable to those they seek to please. “Whom should I serve,” replied Hushai evasively,—“if not the son of my friend, whom all Israel have

declared king. As I have befriended David, so will I be in thy presence." Hushai being a man highly honored in the land he was associated with Ahitophel in council. "Give counsel among you," said the usurper. "What shall we do to secure our sovereignty?" To avoid all possibility of reconciliation between David and his son, the wily Ahitophel advised Absalom to take possession publicly of his father's women, who were left behind in the palace. This base counsel was followed; and thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Nathan! Ahitophel next wisely proposed to set out that night and follow David with the soldiers they had with them, and thus, by smiting him and his people, the country would be at peace. To the great alarm of Hushai, the proposal was agreeable to Absalom and his warriors, and it would have resulted in the utter destruction of his master. He, therefore, thus addressed the council: The counsel that Ahitophel hath given is not good. For thou knowest, Absalom, thy father is a great warrior and his men are mighty men of war, and are now chafed in their minds as bears robbed of their whelps. Therefore, I counsel

thee to gather together a larger army, consisting of all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba; and head it in thine own person; and we will so completely destroy them all there shall not be one left." As it was not the purpose of the Lord to permit Absalom to triumph, he turned his heart and those of the people so that they were pleased with the counsel of Hushai. Time was thus gained for David. His friend hastened to Zadok and bade him send word to David by his son and his friend immediately. These two young men, not to excite suspicion by their absence, had not entered the city, but dwelt at the village of En-rogel near the king's gardens in the valley beneath the city walls. A trusty servant was despatched to the young men with the above account and they were bidden to hasten to David. A lad overheard their discourse, and seeking Absalom's presence told him all; probably hoping for a present. Soldiers were dispatched after the young men, who had arrived near Bahurim, but seeing them coming they sought shelter in a house friendly to David, and were hid in an empty well, over which a woman threw some clothes. Absalom's servants were

foiled by this faithful woman, and they returned, having despaired of seeing them. Hushai escaped from the city, and Absalom dared not touch the priest of the Lord.

Ahitophel, when he saw his counsel was despised and the ruinous suggestions of Hushai's accepted, knew that Absalom would be defeated, and David reign again. He then had nothing to hope for except disgrace and death; so, in a despairing mood, he hanged himself.

David and his band passed over Jordan. They were met at Mahanaim by three warm friends of David, called Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai. They were well provided with refreshments for the weary wanderers, and spread mats and carpets for them, upon which were placed, in basons and earthenware, flour, parched corn, honey, butter, flesh of sheep, and milk. This timely supply was gratefully received by David and his people. Very different was this conduct from that of Shimei. Absalom approached with a large army, headed by Amasa, cousin of Joab.

With a sorrowing heart, David divided his followers into three bodies, headed by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, the prince of Gath. David was not

permitted to go to battle, as he was told by his people,—“Thou art worth ten thousand of us, and it matters not if we die.” The king accordingly remained in the city of Mahanaim. He stood in the gate as his people passed, and calling to him the three leaders said to them, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom!” The people heard these words of the old man with pity for his great sorrow.

Joab met Absalom's army while spread about in the woods of Ephraim. He fell upon them suddenly and they were defeated. Absalom, riding rapidly, bareheaded under the trees, was caught by his thick hair among the boughs, and his ass ran from under him, leaving him there. A man ran and told Joab. “Behold I saw Absalom hanging in an oak!” “Why did'st thou not smite him?” cried Joab angrily. “I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and his jeweled girdle!” “Though I should receive a thousand shekels,” said the honest soldier, “I would not put forth my hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee, and Abishai, and Ittai, not to touch the young man. I should have wrought

evil if I had done it; and thou thyself would'st have told the king." "I may not tarry thus with thee!" said Joab impatiently; and calling ten trusty men, he sought the spot where hung this unhappy young man; and in spite of his father's injunction, and nothing moved by his great beauty, this bloody and pitiless man shot three arrows through him, and left his men to finish the business. The prince was cast into a pit, which was filled with stones heaped on high.

Then the trumpet of retreat was blown, and the people returned to Mahanaim. The death of Absalom was only known to the few who killed him, and one of these was charged to go before and tell David. Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, claimed the privilege of being first, but it was not granted him until Cushai had set forth, being, however, fleet of foot he soon outran him. David meanwhile set in the gateway, while a man stood in one of the towers and watched. "I see a man running," he cried down to David. "If he be alone," said the king, "he beareth good tidings; otherwise there would be many flying." The other man was soon after seen, and they were watched with great anxiety,

until at last Ahimaaz appeared and called from a distance, "All is well." When he reached the king he fell before him and cried, "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up to thee the men who lifted up their hands against my lord the king!" "Is the young man Absalom safe!" asked David trembling." "I saw him not," he replied,— "I saw only a great tumult." Cushi now approached, calling out, "Tidings my lord the king! The Lord hath avenged thee this day of all those who rose up against thee!" The king said,— "Cushi! Is the young man Absalom safe?" Cushi, with his eyes dropped to the ground, answered in a subdued tone,— "May all the enemies of the king be as that young man is!" The king knew that Absalom was dead. He turned from them and ascended to the turret where alone he might indulge his grief; and as he went he moaned,— "O my son Absalom,—my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The army approached with trumpets and rejoicing, and were surprised not to see the king's approving smile. Joab asked for him, and was

told that David had shut himself up to mourn for his son. The people ceased their rejoicing, the victory was turned to mourning, and the men silently entered the city. Joab was vexed at this, as he thought, untimely grief for the usurper who had driven him and his people from their home. He was a bold man, so he sought the king and cried impatiently, "Thou hast shamed the faces of thy servants this day, who have saved thee from death: for thou showest them thou lovest thine enemies better than thy friends! Yea, if Absalom had lived, and all we died, it would have pleased thee well! Now therefore arise, go forth and speak unto thy servants; for I swear they will not tarry here with thee to weep, but be soon scattered." The feeble monarch was obliged to submit to this harsh language, and composing himself went down to his seat in the gate; a usual seat for a judge or king while giving audience. His people flocked gladly to him, and each received his reward. The dispersed band of Absalom also now came and surrendered to the king. David sent messengers to Zadok and Abiathar in Jerusalem, and promised pardon to the people, and

the place of general to Amasa (which Joab had held), as the king was well pleased to punish him thus. His offers were received with approbation, and king David set out to return to his capital. Ferry-boats rowed them over Jordan, near which they encountered the railer Shimei, who, humbled and frightened, had the meanness to prostrate himself and ask for pardon. Again would Abishai have put him to death; but David remembering the mercy showed himself, answered:—"There shall no man be put to death this day in Israel;" and Shimei was pardoned. Ziba was also with him. Mesphibosheth came also to meet the king, complaining of the perfidy of Ziba; and declared he had not trimmed his beard nor washed his feet since the king departed. The king, probably, thought both were a little to blame and divided the land between them.

Barzillai, who had so kindly ministered to the wants of David, accompanied him as far as the river Jordan. He then bid the king farewell. "Why not go over with me," asked David. "I will give thee a home in Jerusalem." "Nay my king," said Barzillai, "thy

servant is this day four-score, nor can I taste what I eat or what I drink, nor hear the voice of the singers. Thy servant would be a burden. Let then thy servant return, that I may die in my own city and be buried in the sepulchre of my fathers. Behold thy servant Chimham, my son,—take him, and whatsoever seems good to thee, so do to him.” David accepted Chimham as his servant, and kissed Barzillai, blessed him, and bade him farewell.

The men of Judah came out of the city, surrounded the king and bore him in triumph onward. This, the men of other tribes, who had gone to battle with the king, could not brook. High words arose between the parties which the king in vain endeavored to reconcile. At length the cry arose, “Every man to his tent, O Israel!” Sheba, a fierce Benjamite blew his trumpet for his people, and with a great body of men withdrew from the king and returned upon their steps. Amasa, the newly appointed general was sent to gather reinforcements, in order to pursue them; but being long absent, David sent Abishai and Joab with their men after him. Joab was exceedingly wrathful when he saw

Amasa placed above him, and resolved upon his destruction. He soon met him, and while saluting him in apparent amity, he slew him. The men were astonished at this cold blooded murder, but at the summons of Joab followed him in pursuit of Sheba. He took refuge in the town of Abel, from the walls of which his head was thrown by a woman to save the town; and thus perished this rebel.

David now found himself again master of Jerusalem and of his enemies, but not at peace. The Lord designed farther trials for him, and the next event of his reign was a tragic one, and clothed with mystery.

A grievous famine desolated the land for three years. David inquired at the altar for the cause, as he feared it a continuation of his punishment. The answer was, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." It will be remembered that this tribe, by a stratagem, evaded the destruction which fell upon the nations around from the troops of Joshua.

Joshua being thus deceived, made a league with them; and the princes of Israel swore by the Lord God of Israel, they would not harm

them, so that after this oath they dared not touch them. As the people of Israel murmured, Joshua, to punish the Gibeonites, made them bondmen, to hew wood and draw water for the priests of the tabernacle. It is supposed they were slain among the priests of Nob, by Saul, and as the name of the Lord had been given for their surety, he righteously punished the offenders. It was determined that seven sons of Saul should suffer death as an expiation of the sin of their father, thus visited upon the second and third generation. David had sworn to protect the children of Jonathán, and reluctantly he, in obedience to what he believed the command of God, sent for the two sons of Rizpah, a wife of Saul, and the five sons of Merab, a daughter of Saul, who was now dead. One of the most beautiful instances of maternal affection ever recorded, was now seen in Israel.

These victims of ancestral crimes were left hanging; and beside her two sons sat Rizpah upon sackcloth spread on the ground; and night and day the scrawing mother watched, to shield her darlings from injury by bird or beast. When David heard of this untiring love and

devotion, he sent for the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and they, with the bodies of the seven young men were honorably buried in the sepulchre of their fathers. The slaughter of the Gibeonites, thus avenged, the famine was stayed. The above facts are considered by commentators as having been altered or distorted probably by the Rabins, as the whole is contrary to many of the laws of the Jews and of God.

David, doomed never to be at peace, is induced by pride, to number the fighting men of his land; who were found to amount to 800,000 valiant men of the sword, besides 500,000 men of Judea. By the mouth of Gad, the prophet, he was told he had sinned by thus arousing the martial spirit of the land, which was now ripe for slaughter upon their neighbors. A pestilence swept over the land, which soon subdued the haughty, and sorely punished David. When 70,000 were slain, an angel appeared upon Mount Moriah, on the spot where Abraham bound his son for sacrifice; and, as if for his sake, the angel here stretched out his hand, and the plague was stayed. This land upon which the angel stood, David purchased from the owner

for the purpose of building an altar to God, and here afterwards stood the superb temple of Solomon.

Arrived at the age of three-score and ten, David felt the pulse of life was slackening, and vital heat departing. His physicians recommended him to procure a young person to sleep with him, that he might thus be relieved of his chills. He accordingly married a young woman named Abishag. The beauty of this young girl proved the ruin of Adonijah, the son of David, and brother of Absalom. He had acquiesced in the decision of David, who had appointed Solomon his successor; but hoping now to obtain Abishag, he set up the standard of rebellion, and was joined by the treacherous Joab, and Abiathar the high priest. These men were probably actuated by the hope of ruling the weak and dissolute Adonijah, which they could not hope to do in the case of the virtuous Solomon. Adonijah intrenched himself in the king's gardens at En-rogel, where he soon gathered a band of the idle and wicked. He had chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. He also slew sheep and oxen, and sacrificed at

an altar, with the help of Abiathar; thus pretending the sanction of God; and then entertained his followers at a magnificent feast.

Nathan, the prophet, and Zadak the priest, in alarm for the dying monarch, and for Solomon, hastened to Bathsheba. "Hast thou not heard," they said, "that Adonijah reigns, and David our lord knoweth it not? Hasten to him, and endeavor to rouse him, and save thy life, and that of Solomon thy son! While thou speakest I will go in."

Bathsheba immediately hastened into the king's room and bowed before his couch. "What wouldst thou?" he asked with a feeble voice. "My Lord and my king," she said to him,— "thou swearest by the Lord thy God, to thine handmaid, that Solomon my son should reign after thee, and yet behold, Adonijah reigneth." David arose in great excitement and asked, if it were true—"yea my Lord, he hath slain oxen at an altar with Abiathar, and Joab. The eyes of all Israel look to thee to decide who shall sit upon thy throne, and if thou dost not act now, I, and my son Solomon, will be destroyed." When she ceased speaking, Nathan came in, and

bowing low, confirmed the sad story,—“Behold they eat and drink, and cry, God save the king Adonijah,” he added, “Is this done by the orders of my lord the king? King David lifted himself up in bed, and said,—“call hither Bathsheba,” for she had retired to the end of the apartment. When she stood before him, the king lifted up his hand and swore, “As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even as I swear unto thee, by the God of Israel, saying assuredly thy son Solomon should sit upon my throne, even so will I again swear!” Bathsheba bowed before the king in reverence, and said, “Let my lord, king David, live forever!” The king then called for Zadok, and Benaiah, captain of the royal guards, who with Nathan, stood before him. David gave his orders to these trusty servants who hastened to do as they were commanded. The king’s mule, upon which he rode in state processions, was brought out, and the young Solomon placed upon it royally clad. Then, surrounded by the king’s body guard and great officers of the court he was led to the fountain Gibon, a public resort, which was always crowded with people.

Here, with a horn of holy oil taken from the tabernacle, Zadok the high priest, anointed Solomon, and proclaimed him king of Israel. Silver trumpets were blown, and instruments of music resounded, while the people cried with joy, "God save king Solomon!" After this, the young king, wearing his father's golden crown, is led back to the palace, through the city which rang with rejoicing; was placed upon his father's throne, where all did him homage.

The sound of the trumpets reached the party of the usurper, who were in the midst of their feast, Joab rose in alarm, crying—"Wherefore can the city be in such uproar?" He was answered by Jonathan, son of Abiathar, who came running in, crying,—“Save yourselves, Solomon is crowned king!” The feast broke up in dismay, as no one hoped to succeed against the king's decree, and the followers of the usurper fled. Adonijah and Joab took refuge in the temple, and caught hold of the horns of the altar, saying they would not come out until Solomon swore they should not die. King Solomon replied,—“If Adonijah will show himself worthy of pardon by his future life I will now

forgive him, but if he still disturb the peace of the realm he shall die." Adonijah came and bowed himself before the king, and Solomon commanded him to return to his house, and not presume to come to court until he was called. Adonijah departed, and probably Joab with him. The rebellion of Adonijah, was the last of those "evils out of his own house," which we have seen Nathan the seer prophesied, would come upon David. His penitence was accepted, and he was allowed to descend to his tomb full of days, and wealth, and honor. Before he died he called his son Solomon and the chiefs of his household before him. "I go the way of all the earth, my son," he said to Solomon. Be thou strong, and keep the charge of the Lord thy God to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes and commandments, as it is written in the law of Moses; that thou mayst prosper in all thou doest! My son, my son, it was in my mind to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God. But I have been a man of war and have shed blood and God forbade me. I was promised a son who should live in peace and quietness with all Israel, and he should be allowed

to build the house. Now, my son, the Lord is with thee. Build the house of the Lord and prosper. I have laid up for thee treasures of gold and silver and brass and stone and cedar, and I have workmen in abundance. Be strong and of good courage: dread not, nor be dismayed!" Turning to the assembled princes, he commanded them to assist his son. "Arise and build the sanctuary!" he said, "Let it be exceeding magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all countries. The Lord your God is on your side!" With some more advice to Solomon regarding Joab, Barzillai, Shimei and others, David the king expired. He was buried in a stately sepulchre in the city of Jerusalem, which was still there in the days of the apostles, and is thought by some to be now in existence. David died in the seventieth year of his age, and fortieth of his reign. A man not without error, as he partook of the fallen nature of his race, in whose character may be seen grandeur and tenderness, and deep piety such as never man has displayed since. To use the words of the celebrated Clarke,—“As a king, a general, a poet, a father, and a friend, he has had few

equals, and no superior, from his own time to the present day." In his Psalms, in which he was assisted by the Divine Spirit, we have a precious legacy through which people of all nations and situations and times can find hope, sympathy, and an echo to their own religious, sorrowful, or grateful feelings. The true piety which breathes in them, and the praises sung to God, render them very appropriate for public as well as private worship; and that they have been used in the Church for so many centuries must be a proof of their divinity. As poems they have never been equalled in later ages. David was a prophet, and a type of Christ. He excelled in music. He was also a great hero and warrior, and just governor. He found the country of the Hebrews distracted by internal divisions, and a prey to enemies which hemmed it in on every hand; but he left it prosperous, and its borders extending from Egypt to the Euphrates. Raised from a shepherd's life to sit upon a throne, victorious and exalted as David became, we never hear him giving himself credit for any of his successes. His words always are,—The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord: thou settest a crown of

pure gold on his head: some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God: the Lord is my strength and my shield,—my fortress, my deliverer: It is he that giveth salvation to kings: If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick," How different is this from the egotistical vain-glory of the heroic Cesar; *I came, I saw, I conquered.* Or the dying words of Julian the Apostate: I die without remorse as I have lived without guilt. The one humbly looking to God, and giving him the glory for every event of his life, the others giving the glory to themselves.

S o l o m o n .

SOLOMON, the wise and the magnificent, commenced his reign at the tender age of twenty years. He had not long sat upon the throne when the conspirators, Adonijah, Abiathar, and Joab were again busily engaged to depose him. Solomon was aware of this, and upon their first movement was determined to sentence them to death, that he might strike fear into the hearts of his enemies, and thus secure the peace of Israel.

The love of Adonijah for Abishag, the young concubine of King David, was used as a pretext for their first step. Could they obtain her for this prince, their children, according to the law, would be heirs to the throne, and consequently Adonijah could assume royal powers.

Adonijah sought an interview with Bathsheba, and entered her presence with counterfeit humility. "Comest thou on errand of

peace," asked the queen-mother. "Peaceably," he answered. "I have something to say unto thee." "Say on." "Thou knowest the kingdom is mine by birthright; and moreover, that many of the people would have placed me upon the throne. God has seen fit to give it to my brother, and I submit. In quietly resigning my right, all return I ask is Abishag, the virgin wife of David. And now I come with one petition to thee." "Speak, Adonijah," she said. "I pray thee go to king Solomon and ask him for Abishag." Bathsheba saw not the design of Adonijah, and deeming it a reasonable request sought the presence of the king. When Solomon saw his mother approach, he dutifully arose from his throne, and bowed himself before her; he then resumed his throne, and caused a chair of state to be placed beside him for her. When seated, she turned to her son and said,—“My son, I desire one petition of thee, and I pray thee say me not nay.” “Ask on, my mother, and I will not say thee nay,” he replied. “Let then Abishag, the Shunamite, be given to Adonijah.” Solomon saw that Bathsheba had been urged to this request by his rebellious half-brother, and

knew the power which would accrue to him were his request granted. "Why dost thou ask Abishag, the Shunamite, for Adonijah!" he asked, ironically, "demand for him the kingdom also; and for Joab and Abiathar. As the Lord liveth, Adonijah hath petitioned now against his own life!" Bathsheba was honorably dismissed, and king Solomon hastened to issue his decree of death against the conspirators.

Let those who condemn Solomon remember his youth, and the dangerous conspiracy which was organized against him by Joab, who carried with him all the army; Abiathar who ruled the priests; and moreover, Adonijah, a son of David. He had once before pardoned the latter, but told him if he again offended he must die. Adonijah was slain; and Joab took sanctuary in the tabernacle. He was dragged hence, and by his blood avenged Abner and Amasa, and many others whom he had slain. Abiathar being a priest was spared; but degraded from his priesthood, and banished to his native city; thus as God foretold to Eli, the priesthood was taken from his house; Abiathar being the last descendant. Benaiah was put over the army in place



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of Joab, and Zadok was made high-priest. By these prompt measures, peace was restored to the kingdom of Israel.

To strengthen himself abroad, Solomon sought alliances with the surrounding nations by marriage. At this time he married the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; but he afterwards added to her an astonishing number of women. The tabernacle was at Gibeon, and there, in the second year of his reign, Solomon with a large number of people repaired to offer thanks for the prosperity that attended him. A thousand burnt-offerings were offered. In a vision of the night the Lord appeared to him, and declared that whatsoever he asked should be given to him. Solomon answered,—“Thy servant, O Lord, is placed over a great and numerous people, and being young, knows not yet how to govern them; give thy servant, therefore, an understanding heart, that I may judge the people wisely.” The Lord answered Solomon;—“because thou hast asked this and not riches or long life for thyself, behold I give thee an understanding heart, and have added to this riches and honor’ Solomon awoke, and rejoiced at

the promises given him, gave other burnt-offerings to his God.

An opportunity was soon given to Solomon to exhibit that wisdom with which he found himself endued. Two women demanded a hearing. Solomon received them seated upon his throne, while the court was assembled around him. The two women were led in, one bearing a dead child, and the other a live one. Prostrating herself before the king, one of them said, —“O my Lord, I and this woman dwell in one house, and each of us was delivered of an infant; the woman’s child died in the night, because she overlaid it; and she arose at midnight and laid it in thy handmaid’s bosom, while she took from me my living child.” “Nay;” interposed the other, fiercely; “the living child is mine, and the dead is thine.” “No!” cried the other, in frantic grief, “the living child is my son, and thine is the dead one!”

The courtiers looked at Solomon, and pitied him, for they did not imagine he could see the truth of this matter. He, however, knew of a sure way to detect the real mother. “Bring me a sword!” he cried; “divide the living in

two, and give half to the one and half to the other!" Horror and scorn for this decision, was expressed upon the face of the assembly. One of the women, with a shriek, fell prostrate and cried,—“O kill him not, my lord! Let her take the child, and in nowise slay it!” The other said, triumphantly, “Let the child be divided, and give her a half!” Then was the sagacity of Solomon seen; the true mother was discovered, and to her desolate bosom was given the boy, while the other was driven forth to punishment. This successful decision increased men's admiration for Solomon's judgment, and they were well pleased with the king that had been given them.

Having the good will of his people, Solomon entered into many new arrangements for the benefit of the kingdom. The country was divided into twelve districts, over each one of which was appointed a purveyor, who supplied the court for one month. He possessed also many horses, dromedaries, and chariots, which he sent to different cities to keep for him. He entered into treaties of peace with all the nations around him, and married the daughters of their

kings and great men. The commerce of Solomon was also very extensive. From Parvaim,—supposed to be Ceylon; and from Tarshish,—the coast of Africa, and from Ophir, ships brought him gold, silver, precious stones, spices, ivory, apes, linen, horses, and various valuable things. For the support of his caravans and ships, Solomon built many cities. Those upon the Red Sea and Persian Gulf protected his southern trade, while Baalbec, and Palmyra, or Tadmor, attest his power, judgment, and magnificence upon his northern frontier. His land now extended from the Euphrates to Egypt, as it had been promised to his ancestor Abraham, 1020 years before. The Hebrew nation were now at the height of prosperity, and “Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree.” “Silver was in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees as sycamores.” Judah and Israel were “eating and drinking and making merry.”

We are further told,—“God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much; and largeness of heart, even as the sand upon the sea shore. And Solomon’s wisdom excelled all the children of the East, and the wisdom of

Egypt." All this knowledge and this wealth was now about to be converted to the use of the Lord. Solomon saw the time was come to commence the building of that great temple which David had imagined, but of which he was not thought worthy.

One of the truest of Solomon's allies and friends was Hiram, king of Tyre. He had been the friend of David; and since the accession of Solomon, friendly messages, and Josephus says, riddles, had been sent between them. To him Solomon now applied for such materials as was to be found in his country.

The following is a letter which King Solomon sent to Hiram, king of Tyre.

"Thou knowest how that David, my father, could not build a house unto the name of the Lord his God, for the wars in which he was engaged. Now that the Lord hath given me peace upon every side, I purpose to build a house unto the name of the Lord, according as God promised David, my father, saying,—thy son whom I will set upon thy throne shall build a house unto my name. Now then, let thy servants go with mine to hew me cedars, and firs, and algum trees, out of Lebanon, for my people are not as skillful as thine to hew timber. Send me also a man cunning to work in gold and silver, and brass, iron, purple, crimson, and blue. I will pay thee and thy servants in wheat, barley, wine, and oil."

Hiram was well pleased with this message from Solomon, and answered his letter thus :

“Blessed be the Lord this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people! I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for; and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, fir, and algum. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea, whence they shall be floated unto the place that thou shalt appoint.”

A league of amity was then made between Hiram and Solomon; and in return for the timber and cunning workmen, and the work subsequently done on the temple, Solomon gave him twenty cities of Gallilee. These cities, however, seem not to have pleased Hiram, who pronounced them *cabul*, meaning *despised*—a name that attached to them some time after.

The great work of the temple had now commenced. Huge stones were chiselled for the foundation, and the curious, large bevelled stones, which are now seen at the foundation of the hill, upon which the temple stood, are supposed by many travelers to be the same that Solomon placed there; the only remains of that great structure. The spot selected for the temple was on Mount

Moriah; the spot where Abraham had offered his son, and where the plague had been stayed on the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite. This hill arose on the east side of the city. Its top was levelled, and around its precipitous sides a wall was built of immense stones, twenty feet long, strongly morticed together and wedged into the rock at the foundation. In the space between the walls were other walls and arches, filled in with a solid mass of great stones fastened together with melted lead, and with earth. The top of the mount was with much labor rendered level by taking away elevations and filling up the hollows. Thus was formed a space seven hundred and fifty feet square, surrounded by precipitous sides three or four hundred feet deep; fitting pedestal for the splendid structure to be placed upon it.

Authors differ so much regarding the measures of the temple and its courts, that we are not able to decide to a certainty all its measurements. This difference, however, is slight. Upon the top of the mount, and in the centre, stood the temple surrounded by courts, each lower than the other, thus giving them the ap-

pearance of a pyramid. This was a form then prevalent through the eastern countries, and which allowed a clear view, to the crowds of worshippers assembled below, of the officiating priests around the temple. The first court was formed by a high wall which ran around the area upon the top of the precipitous sides; which, as well as the facing of the cliff, was of white marble. This outer wall, according to Prideaux, inclosed a space seven hundred and fifty feet square. This was surrounded upon all sides by an arcade supported with two rows of pillars of marble, except from the south side, which was more magnificent, and contained three rows of pillars. Within this was another wall inclosing another court, leaving a space between that and the outer wall seventy-five feet wide which was called the court of the Gentiles. Again other courts were inclosed, all floored with marble, and surrounded with porticoes, over which were chambers for the use of the priests and singers. In the centre of the last court, called that of the priests, stood the temple itself. These courts, as I said before, were each elevated so as to lead up into each other by flights of steps and splen-

did gates covered with plates of gold, silver, or brass.

We are now in the last court, and before the temple itself. This edifice was one hundred and fifty feet in length, and one hundred and five in breadth. In front of it was a porch of the width of the house and two hundred and ten feet high. The whole temple was built of stone, covered with cedar, carved in a beautiful manner, and the whole inside and out completely plated with gold, so that it appeared all carved out of gold. The temple was divided into two parts, the Holy of Holies being the inner. This was overlaid with the purest gold of Ceylon. In it stood the ark, over which were two cherubim of gold, bowing their wings before the mercy seat, as if in adoration. This ark was a chest three feet nine inches in length, and two feet three inches in height. It contained the two tables of the law, and the rod of Aaron, with a pot of manna. It was placed upon a piece of rock which had been purposely left when arranging the platform on which the temple stood. This also, and the room in which it was, were dazzling with carved gold. A curtain, woven of rich

hues, was suspended by gold chains before the door. The outer apartment of the temple contained the altar of incense; a table of precious wood, covered with plates of gold, having around it an ornamental edge of gold work, and upon which a silver cup of sweet spices was set to burn:—the table of shew bread, also of gold, containing twelve cakes or loaves of bread with leaves of gold between them, and small gold cups upon each pile, with incense burning; and the golden candlestick, a tall candelabrum of pure gold, having its stalk richly carved, supporting seven carved branches, bearing upon the ends flowers holding lamps. Ten of these superb candelabra stood upon each side the ark. The doors of the temple were of cedar, overlaid with carved gold, over which hung curtains of blue, and scarlet, and purple embroidery upon linen. Nothing could surpass the richness of this temple, thus apparently formed entirely of gold; carved with flowers, palm trees, and cherubic figures; and its suspended curtains of gorgeous embroidery. A cloister ran around its sides and back, forming chambers for the priests, above those were windows. Pass we out now

of this magnificent building, into the first court, called the court of the priests. It was paved with marble of divers colors, and surrounded by an arcade, supported by two rows of marble pillars. In this court were offered all the sacrifices, and here the services were held. Four gates of gold led from this down several steps into the court of the Israelites, the worshippers not being permitted to go farther up; a part of this court was divided and arranged with galleries for the women. A low balustrade, elegantly ornamented, separated this from the outer court, called court of the Gentiles, reached also through golden gates and a descent of steps. This being a place allotted for strangers and foreigners was not considered as sacred as the rest, and here it was that in our Saviour's time stood the tables of the money changers. The temple standing thus high above its courts, which were only divided by open arcades or low walls, its services must have been seen, and its music heard, by the assembled worshippers below, very distinctly. The temple court was two hundred and eighty feet long, and two hundred and two broad. Against the back part stood

the temple, while in the court about it were magnificent articles of worship, of gold and brass. Before the porch stood two pillars of brass, sixty feet high, exquisitely wrought, having capitals adorned with net work, chain work and pomegranates of brass. The one was called Jachin, *durability*, and the other Boaz, *strength*: these, perhaps, were in imitation of Egyptian obelisks. In the centre of the court, before the temple, stood the altar of burnt offerings. This was built of unhewn stones, in the shape of a pyramid; the base was forty-eight feet square, upon which were successive layers, each smaller than the others, until the top was reached, which was thirty-six feet square. This upper part was the brazen altar, it being formed of that metal; and here the burnt-offerings were placed. The priests ascended to it by a slanting pathway built up to the last platform. Shovels, tongs, pots, and basins of brass belonged to it, while at each corner were square pillars, a foot high, and hollow, to contain blood, called horns of the altar. Between the altar and the arcade of the court stood a magnificent tank, or fountain, formed of brass by the men sent by Hiram of

Tyre. It was forty-eight feet in circumference, and was supported by twelve oxen of brass, three looking together towards the four corners. A wreath of lillies surrounded it under the brim. This was used by the priests to wash themselves. Besides this, there were ten lavers, five on each side of the court, for the purpose of washing the offerings or articles used. These were also cast in brass, and were supported by spiral pillars, which stood upon a stand of brass seven feet long by six broad, adorned by figures of the lion, ox, and eagle. To this was fastened four brazen wheels that they might be carried about the court. Beside the brazen gate, which was opposite the temple, stood a throne upon a platform of brass where the king sat when he was present at the sacrifices. Added to these there were tables of marble and gold, which stood about the court, and spoons, snuffers, basins, and other utensils for worship, of brass and gold, to the number of thousands, if we can credit Josephus.

This superb temple and its courts being finished, Solomon made preparations for its dedication, of great magnificence. The day had ar-

rived, and thousands of worshippers were seen pouring down from the hills around, through the streets, and up to the courts of the Lord; their joyful eyes lifted up to that glorious house of gold and gems, from which a brilliant sun is reflected in dazzling rays and scintillations. Solomon, with an imposing train of courtiers, nobles, warriors, and priests, issues from his house, and crosses the bridge which leads to the temple; from which a hundred silver trumpets are pouring forth their notes of joyful adoration. The first to enter were a band of priests bearing the ark and the holy vessels which were in the tabernacle; these, with reverence great, were to be deposited within the Holy of Holies. Solomon seated himself in state upon the brazen throne prepared for him while the courts around and below were filled with priests and people. The ark was placed between the wings of the cherubim, while, from the hundreds of priests, who stood at each side, clothed in white linen, arose the sound of singing, and harps, and cymbals, and trumpets. Then the glory of the Lord came down upon the altar, and the house and courts were filled with smoke and flashes of light.

Great awe filled the hearts of all;—the music ceased, and the people prostrated themselves before the Lord; while the voice of Solomon was heard, saying: The Lord hath said that he would dwell in thick darkness, but I have built a habitation for thee to dwell in forever!" The king then turned and blessed all the people, who arose and the cloud dispersed. He explained to them in a few words the cause of their assembling, and the origin of the temple, which was designed by David, who was not permitted to build it; and it was completed by Solomon. Immense flocks of sheep and oxen were next brought forth, and after being properly slain and cut up by the officials, were lain upon the great brazen altar before the temple. Solomon kneeled upon the brazen scaffold on which stood his throne, and lifting up his hands uttered that noble prayer which hath not a counterpart in any language. He asked for blessings from on high for the people, and acceptance of their sacrifice—in any sorrow or great emergency he asked the Lord to "hear in heaven, thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplication, and when thou hearest forgive and sustain." When

prayers arose in drought, or famine, or war, or sin, or suffering, or in the temple, the Lord was adjured to "arise from thy resting place—and let thy priests, O Lord, be clothed in salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness!"

The prayer was ended, and lo! a flame from heaven descended upon the altar and consumed the sacrifice! At this manifestation of divine approbation, arose great shouting, and singing, and clamor of instruments of music, other sacrifices and burnt-offerings were offered; and the king and people departed from the temple in joy. Seven days did Solomon keep up feasting, and rejoicing with the thousands assembled in Jerusalem, and on the eighth day he sent them away. And they blessed the king, and went into their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness the Lord had done for David his servant, and for his people Israel.

When all the feasting was over, the Lord visited Solomon, and told him his supplication for favor and protection to Israel was heard, and should be answered if they continued worthy of it. But if, on the contrary, he or his children, or his people, should now, or in future, dis-

obey the Lord, then—"will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this temple which I have hallowed for the worship of my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a by-word among all people!" A fearful prophecy, and truly fulfilled! For ages have travelers, of all people, come to gaze with astonishment upon the ruins of that city and site of that temple; and have looked upon the remnant of that scattered nation, and have bowed their heads with awe before a God who can send down such fearful judgments!

Solomon now saw himself at the head of a powerful nation. His borders were extended, his fleet was large, and army numerous, and he was at peace with all around him. In his palace he lived in great state. This palace is described as being very splendid; and composed of several edifices connected together by courts, and these surrounded by piazzas and arcades supported by carved pillars. Around the whole were gardens and grounds laid out in much taste. The palace was built of white marble, adorned with carved cedar and algum or cypress.

wood, and richly inlaid and ornamented with precious stones. One of these magnificent rooms Josephus describes as wainscoted half the way up with such rare and precious marbles and stones,—“as make the mines whence they are dug famous.” Above this ran a line of sculpture upon, probably, white marble, “whereon are represented trees and all sorts of plants, with the shades that arose from their branches; and leaves wrought so prodigious subtle that you would think they were in motion.” The other part of the wall up to the roof, was plastered and painted in brilliant colors. One of the buildings of the palace was a splendidly adorned banquet-room. Another was a hall of justice, one hundred and seventy-five feet long; which, being supported by pillars of cedar from Lebanon, is called the house of the forest of Lebanon; upon the columns were suspended two hundred targets, and three hundred shields, all of beaten gold. Besides this palace, which stood upon Mount Zion, there was a country house, built for his wife, the daughter of the king of Egypt. When Solomon visited her he rode in a splendid chariot surrounded by archers clad

in garments of Tyrian purple, their long, flowing locks sprinkled with gold dust. The king himself was clad in white robes. Around this palace lay those luxurious gardens which are described in Solomon's Song. And here, in retirement, he may probably have composed some of those thousand songs and proverbs which display so well his piety and learning; and that wisdom which is described as being greater than that of the Egyptians. As a poet we can only judge Solomon by the book of Canticles, which alone remains out of 1005 poems he is said to have written. This, however, by its pleasing and grand imagery, its touching portraiture of passions and affections, will stamp him as a poet of a superior order. His knowledge of natural history was also great; he is said to have written upon botany, zoology, ornithology, and various other departments of this science, but we can only have proof of it by expressions in his other writings, as they also are lost. Throughout his writings that remain, are innumerable illustrations drawn from animals, birds, insects, flowers, fruit, trees, natural scenery, and objects, fire, water, air, and many others. The book of

Ecclesiastes ranks him high as a moral philosopher. The book of Proverbs shows us an admirable knowledge of human nature, and contains advice for almost every relation of life. Medical books are also supposed to have been written by Solomon.

The fame of his wisdom, thus spread by his writings, was conveyed to all the nations around; and joined to the report of his wealth, his navies, and conquests, attracted to his court a great concourse of distinguished people. To the ignorant, this sudden prosperity and glory of Solomon, and his books, especially medical ones, caused him to appear as a magician. Ages after his death he was so considered, and traditions yet remain of Solomon's ring and seal, whereby he built Tadmor in the desert, made genii obedient to him, and cured diseases.

Among the sovereigns who came to visit Solomon, was the Queen of Sheba, a country of Arabia Felix. Descended, as some writers say, from Abraham and Keturah. She cherished in her heart, a knowledge of God; and was a woman of great piety and virtue. The ships of Solomon which came to her coasts for gold, precious

stones, and spices; gave her a great idea of his power and riches. From others she heard of his vast wisdom, and she respected him; but when she learnt his deep piety, and was told of the wonderful temple he was building to the God of the Hebrews, she experienced a powerful wish to visit him, and hear from his lips the exposition of things abstruse, which had puzzled her. Accordingly, she sat out with a great train towards Jerusalem. The deserts were passed, the hills of Judea were in sight, and at length, crowning the summit of one, that glorious city of marble and gold arose before her. Over roads, paved with smooth black stones, the queen of the south passed on; and behind her came a long train of camels, laden with gold, precious stones, spices, myrrh, and frankincense, algum and balsam trees, and many more valuable things. As they approached the city, its walls and towers of stone, and gates of brass, prepared them a little for the magnificence within. Solomon sent a stately train to meet the queen and escort her to the palace. Here the strangers were overwhelmed with the grandeur of its halls, and terraces, and courts, inlaid and

adorned with gold, and rich painting, and rare marbles. In the hall of State, was Solomon in all his glory. The queen was dazzled when she looked around her—upon the gorgeously painted walls, having devices of gems set in gold, and upon the immense train of courtiers and officers of State, clad in robes of all hues, adorned with gold embroidery and jewels. The centre of all this, was Solomon himself, clad in white ; it being his favorite color—and was the reason, probably, why the Saviour compared a lilly to him. He sat upon that wondrous throne whose unequalled magnificence was ascribed by Arabian writers to magic. It was of ivory, adorned with gold and jewels. Six steps led up to a seat, upon each side of which was a lion, cast in pure gold ; and twelve lions of the same were upon the other steps, one upon each step. Upon the ivory sides of this throne, according to oriental writers, were trees of inlaid gold, whose fruit was made of precious stones, and whose branches supported birds and peacocks formed of gems of many hues. Upon the front of the steps were, in like manner, delineated vine-branches, the grapes formed by amethysts,

emeralds, and rubies. There is much more related of the splendor and magic of this throne, but for which we have no warrant from scripture. It is there spoken of as being "overlaid" with gold, and we may imagine it thus adorned.

The Queen of Sheba approached, with her servants bearing the presents, which were laid at the foot of the throne. Solomon descended and led her to the chair of State upon the ivory throne, where a long interview took place between them; "and she communed with him of all that was in her heart." From him she probably learned the particulars of the history of the tribe, and laws of Moses, of which she had only before received intimations. He also conversed with her upon government, of philosophy, and of plants; for he could tell of all, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop which grows on the wall; also beasts, fowls, fish, and reptiles.

"The report which I heard in my own land," said the queen, "of thy acts, and of thy wisdom, is true. I believed it not until I came and have seen it with my own eyes; and now I see the half has not been told me; thy wisdom, and

thy prosperity exceedeth the fame which reached me!"

Again, with enthusiasm, she exclaimed, "Happy are these thy servants, who continually hear thy wisdom! Blessed be the Lord thy God who delighted on thee and set thee on the throne of Israel!"

The queen was led to the glorious banquet hall, and here again she was astonished at the display, as all the vessels were of chased gold, and the servants numerous and splendidly dressed. She was next shown the temple, and when she beheld the noble arched-bridge over which Solomon passed from his palace to the temple, and beheld above her those sacred golden walls, she was overcome with awe; and the emotions which agitated her sensitive mind caused her to become faint. She, however, rallied and entered the temple with fear and reverence.

After a long stay at the court of Solomon, the Queen of Sheba departed, bearing with her many valuable presents, gifts of the king. Her report, upon her return, led many other Ara-

bian princes to visit Jerusalem; and, as they were lavish of gold and other valuable things, Solomon gradually acquired great treasures.

Years of peace and luxury passed, and Solomon's youth-wisdom passed with them. Age impaired his strength of mind, and pleasures his love of divine things. He became luxurious; and shut up in one of his magnificent palaces, gave himself up to sensual pleasures. From all the surrounding nations, he sent for beautiful women until he numbered one thousand wives and concubines. He launched into great extravagancies, and as his treasure lessened, levied heavy taxes upon his subjects. Nay, worse than all, Solomon became so much under the influence of these women as to permit them to erect temples on high places, to their Gods Moloch, Chemosh, Ashtoreth, and Milcom. It is even said, they induced him sometimes to join in their ceremonies, but surely not in earnest; as Solomon, however changed, never could have forgotten his God. That he severely offended Him is true, by having, in the first place, accumulated treasures and horses, and in making foreign conquests. In taking wives from idola-

trious nations he also broke an express law of God given by Moses, and by them was led into folly.

But Solomon was checked in his career. A prophet was sent to him, by whom he was re-proved, and told that God would rend from him part of his kingdom. One tribe alone should remain to his successors for David's sake, and Messiah, his descendent; and his days should end in disquiet and war.

The surrounding nations were stirred up to war against Solomon, and during the rest of his days his borders were harried by Hadad the Edomite, and Rezon, king of Syria. Discontent arose among his people, and conspiracy among the officers of his own household. Jeroboam, encouraged by Ahijah, a prophet, headed a party against the king, but being discovered fled into Egypt. All this greatly distressed Solomon, and he passed his remaining days in weariness and vexation. He is supposed then to have written Ecclesiastes. There he looks back to the errors of his life and exclaims, "All is vanity!" He tells of the pleasures and magnificence with which he surrounded himself, in

hopes of creating happiness, all of which was madness and folly. "I builded me houses," he says, "I planted me gardens with pools of water; I got me servants, and maidens, and cattle, and treasures, men and women; singers, and all delights of the sons of men, whatsoever my eyes desired; and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit!"

This testimony of the vanity of earthly joys from such a man as Solomon; a king famed for talents and accomplishments; for treasures and magnificence, beyond what was possessed by any man who lived before him or since should be laid to our hearts, and lead us to beware of their influence over us. Solomon died and was buried in the city of David his father, and his son Rehoboam reigned in his stead.

Rehoboam.

THE holy city of Shechem, where repose the bones of Joseph and Joshua, was stirred out of its usual quiet, by the pomp and noise attending a coronation ; for here had repaired the prince Rehoboam, to receive the crown of his father, Solomon. God, however, had decreed against the succession of Solomon's family. Peace was not to be the portion of the Hebrews longer, for they had sinned and were to be punished.

While Solomon, in the height of his glory, was weakly worshipping at the idol temples of his Egyptian wife, he little imagined the scene then enacting at the gates of Jerusalem where his downfall was decreed by a power higher than his own. Through the gates passed out Jeroboam, once the son of a poor widow, now a ruler in the land, and about to repair in great state to his province. Before him, in the road, he be-

held, with flowing robes and hands uplifted, the Prophet Ahijah—Jeroboam stopped, and the prophet taking off his robe tore it deliberately in twelve pieces.

“Hear the words of the Lord God of Israel!” he said. Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to Jeroboam; take then these ten pieces. The other two shall remain with Solomon’s son for David’s sake. Reign then over the kingdom of Israel! If thou wilt walk in my ways I shall build thee a sure house; if not, the punishment of David and Solomon shall be thine. I will not however always afflict the seed of David.”

Jeroboam departed on his way. He did not long however remain in quiet, for Solomon, hearing of the conduct of Ahijah, and thinking he could alter the decrees of God, sent to kill him, and Jeroboam fled to Egypt.

Rehoboam was crowned, and now stood surrounded by his father’s old councilors and rulers. Jeroboam and a large band of conspirators were also there, seeking an opportunity of overthrowing his rival.

He advanced to the throne and spake thus;

Thy father, to support the great splendor in which he lived, and also his idol temples laid great taxes upon us which are grievous to be borne; now, therefore, O Rehoboam, take off these taxes and we will serve thee well!"

The king demanded time to consider, and turning to the ministers of his father's kingdom asked their advice. They counseled lenient measures, as being best calculated to make this already dissatisfied people his friends. The counsel of the old men did not suit him, for he cared not to lessen his income. His young friends and followers, whom he now consulted, enjoined upon him not to loosen the least item of their bonds, but rather tighten them. Rehoboam rejected the advice of old and well tried friends for that of profligate youth, and his doom was sealed; the kingdom of the Hebrews was rent in twain. "My answer is,"—he scornfully said to Jeroboam and the people—"if my father made your yoke heavy I will add to your yoke;—and if he chastised you with whips, I will chastise you with scorpions!" A stupor sat upon the assembly for a moment, broken soon, however, by the shouts of Jeroboam and his partisans:—"Down with the house of David!—they cried—what care we for

it who careth not for us! To your tents, O Israel!" Great tumult ensued—Jeroboam drew off with nearly all the people; and Rehoboam, alarmed, sent Adoram after them, to renew the interview. They heard him not, but turning, stoned him to death. Then sprang Rehoboam into his chariot and fled to Jerusalem.

The two tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained faithful to the house of David. Of these, Rehoboam, burning with wrath, assembled one hundred and fourscore thousand warriors to fight with Jeroboam.

The expedition, however, did not set out, for the decree had gone forth that Israel and Judah should be separated from that day. Shemaiah, a prophet, commissioned from on high, stood before the king and his men, and said; Thus saith the Lord; ye shall not go up and fight against your brethren, the children of Israel;—return every man to his house, for this thing is from me!"

The word of power struck to their hearts and the army dispersed.

Rehoboam was a weak and wicked prince; and during his reign a gross darkness and amazing stupidity came over the people. Their

powerful God was not forgotten, but was insulted by altars built to idols, which, surrounded by groves, were seen upon the sacred hills which stood around about the holy city. To awake them from their folly, the Almighty Avenger stirred up Shishak, king of Egypt, to attack Jerusalem, in hopes of conquering it for his friend Jeroboam, Shishak could not take the city, but was bought off by Rehoboam, who delivered up to him, among other treasures, the golden shields which were made by Solomon. These had been borne by soldiers before the king when he went in state to the temple;—and, not to curtail his pomp, Rehoboam caused brass ones to be made in their stead.

The remaining years of the king of Judah were spent in skirmishes and bickerings with the king of Israel. He reigned, however, seventeen years. The family he left was numerous, for he had eighteen wives and sixty concubines, twenty-eight sons and three-score daughters. Many cities were built by this prince to secure his kingdom to his son Abijah, whose mother was daughter of Absalom. When he died he was buried in the sepulchre of the kings of Judah, in the city of David.

Abijam King of Judah.

Abijam, or Abijah, the son of Rehoboam's favorite wife Maachah, succeeded his father on the throne. His reign was short, and noted for nothing except battles with the king of Israel. He also continued the idol-worship instituted by his father. The temple, however, was not neglected, and for its sake, and David's sake he was suffered to sit upon the throne. He seems to have been a valiant warrior and gained a great victory over Jeroboam in the celebrated battle of Zemaraim.

The king of Israel, weary of the ineffectual contest with Judah, determined, now that Rehoboam was dead, to crush his young son with one great blow. He gathered together eight hundred thousand men and marched towards Jerusalem. The stout hearted king of Judah, was not daunted by this array, and with an army of only four hundred thousand went out to meet

Jeroboam. The army of Israel lay at the foot of Mount Ephraim, and Abijah pitched his camp upon the mount, at a place called Zemaraim.

When each side had set their army and were ready to charge, Abijah stood upon an eminence, and thus addressed the king of Israel and his men:—

‘Hear me thou Jeroboam, and all Israel! why stand ye here in battle array before the royal descendant of David? Know you not that the kingdom was given to David’s seed forever, and that none can prevail against it?—what trust ye in!—Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon, or the golden calves he has erected for your worship? As for us, we have the Lord God on our side—the sons of Aaron minister unto him morning and evening with sacrifice and sweet incense. O children of Israel! fight not against your God; for if ye do ye surely shall not prosper!’

The words of truth were taking effect, and Jeroboam, fearing for his army, detached a band to the rear to fall upon the men of Judah, while Abijah was speaking. The king now found himself attacked in front and rear, and

directed the priests to cry to the Lord for them. Then arose the horrid din of battle—shrieks and cries were heard, and shouting of the sons of Judah, and, above all, the peal of the sacred silver trumpets of the Levites. The Israelites already in a panic fled at once, and Abijah returned in triumph to Jerusalem with prisoners and booty in great numbers.

Of Abijah we have only to relate more, that he married fourteen wives; begat twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. He was buried in the sepulchres of his father, at Jerusalem.

Asa, Third King of Judah.

IN the life of this king we have a little relief from the details of the godless men who preceded him. The piety of Asa, he most probably received from his mother, as his father cared for none of those things. He began his reign by pulling down all idols, and spared not the

favorite image Astarte, worshipped by his grandmother, but caused it to be burned. The groves he spared which was thought wrong; but he probably thought it more politic to leave them.

Jerusalem was blest by a peace of ten years, during which Asa employed himself in preparing for war; which he could not always prevent. Cities were repaired and built, and provided against the day of want.

It proved these measures were just, for the Ethiopians came down upon his borders with a host of a thousand thousand men and three hundred chariots. Asa soon collected together an army and marched out to meet the enemy. Of the men of Judah there were three hundred thousand, bearing targets and spears; and of Benjamites, two hundred and fourscore thousand with shields, bows, and arrows. When the pious Asa arrived at the city of Mareshah, where he encamped, he looked with a sigh into the beautiful valley of Zepathah, whose peaceful glades and slopes were now alive with a host of dark Ethiopians, Cushites, and Philistines, who, with horrid clangor, cried the wild war cries of their tribes. The king knelt down, with his

priests around him, and cried unto the Lord his God, and said:—"O Lord it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many or with them who have no power. Help us then, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art God; let not man prevail against thee!"

The prayer of Asa was heard; the enemy could not prevail against him, but were routed with great slaughter. Great was the spoil in gold and silver, arms, and cattle, and the army returned towards Jerusalem with hearts rejoicing in the mercy of God. To add to their satisfaction, the prophet Azariah met them, and congratulated them upon their success. "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin!" he said. "The Lord is with you, he hath given you the victory and will not forsake you if ye forsake not him. Seek him, and he will be found of you. The worship and the law hath hitherto been much neglected, and there was no peace in those days, but great vexations fell upon all, and nation destroyed nation. Be ye strong, therefore, in the Lord, and your deeds shall be rewarded. With this word of encour-

agement and admonition, the people were greatly rejoiced.

The holy temple was now once more seen in all the glory that had adorned it in the days of Solomon. Its neglected courts no longer beheld a cold ceremonial and scanty worshippers. It was renewed and regilt, its walls replated, and its golden vessels burnished, for Asa meant, with great state, to dedicate his spoil to the Lord. The people with joy repaired to the temple, and there, with grand ceremonial, were offered seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. They swore unto the Lord with great shouting and sounding of trumpets and cornets, that they would seek the Lord their God, with all their heart and their soul! Feasting, and music, and other demonstrations of joy prevailed throughout the city for many days.

The noise of these doings aroused the men of Israel, who saw that the Lord was at Jerusalem, and they came over in numbers to dwell beneath the shadow of the temple. The king of Israel, greatly alarmed, summoned his warriors, and set out in hopes of conquering Judah. He com-

menced by building the city of Ramah as a stronghold for his men.

Asa, not being inclined to battle again, sent gifts to Ben-hadad, king of Syria, to induce him to make a diversion by attacking the cities of Israel. This he willingly did, and the king of Israel was forced to leave Ramah and return to defend his borders. Asa congratulated himself upon his cunning and destroyed Ramah, with whose remains he built the towns of Geba and Mispah. Great was his surprise then, when, instead of praise, he obtained rebuke for his deeds.

Hanani, the seer, stood before him, and said: "Thou hast done foolishly, O Asa, in relying upon the king of Syria. Why didst thou not call upon the Lord? Were not the Ethiopians a huge host, with very many horsemen and chariots? Yet thou didst rely upon the Lord, and he delivered them into thy hands! Henceforth, therefore, look for no more peace!

The people who stood around lowered upon the king, for they knew he was in the wrong; which so excited his wrath that he ordered his guards to put the prophet in prison. This was

an impolitic measure, for the people's murmurs grew to angry words, and they demanded the prophet's release with great clamor. Asa's anger grew stronger, and he oppressed the people with fines and imprisonments. The peace in which he lived was, as the seer had prophesied, gone from him. His feet soon after became diseased: the disorder ascended, and killed him, after two years' suffering, in the forty-first year of his reign. With great pomp, and hundreds of men burning spices, Asa, the king, was carried upon a richly adorned bier to his sepulchre in the tomb of his fathers.



Jeroboam, First King of Israel.

JEROBOAM, the son of Nebat, having, as we said above, created a party against Rehoboam; caused himself to be crowned king. Ten tribes of Israel came over to his standard, as the prophet had foretold; and the Jewish kingdom was divided. He was a bold and politic man,



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and set himself to work to establish himself firmly upon his throne.

His first step was to rebuild and embellish Shechem, in which he meant to reside. His next was to keep his people with him when the festivals of the church occurred, or they would go up as usual to Jerusalem, and thus, perhaps, be enticed away. With this view he caused two temples to be erected, one at Dan and the other at Bethel, the two extreme boundaries of his kingdom. In these he placed golden calves, with an altar before each, upon which to arrange the fire-offering. It is not supposed that Jeroboam caused these images to be erected, that the people might worship them. He could not expect idolatry would be well received, and an attempt at its introduction might alienate his people from him. It is thought, by commentators, these so called calves were cherubim, such as were over the ark in the temple—winged creatures with the face of an ox and figure of man.

The feast of the tabernacles approached, and Jeroboam sat in state to hold it, at Bethel. Here, in his splendid temple, surrounded by numerous

priests, raised from the people, and by crowds of worshippers in tents outside, he addressed the people: "You may be surprised, my countrymen, that I have here erected cherubim and held our feasts instead of going to Jerusalem; but it was to save you the journey among your enemies that I raised these altars. God is everywhere, and can hear your prayers here as well as elsewhere. Now let the burnt offerings be presented!" But Jadon, the prophet of the Lord, who had been sent from Jerusalem, stood before him. "Nay, thou art an idolater, Jeroboam," he said, "God commanded Solomon to build his temple in Jerusalem; and these altars raised by thy hand are abominable to him. Ye false priests away! for I see around me the bones of priests who shall be slain some future time by a pious king whom the Lord will raise up to avenge him!" Jeroboam would have stopped him, but he called out, "As a token that all I say is true, this altar shall now break apart and spill your sacrilegious offerings." In a rage the king stretched out his hand to seize Jadon when, lo! his arm was withered and fell at his side as dead; and the altar com-

ing apart spilled the offering. Great consternation sat upon every face, and the king knew that a true prophet stood before him. With great humiliation he said, "Entreat now the Lord thy God, that my hand may be restored to me again!" It was healed, and he then pressed the holy man to enter his house and eat, and be rewarded. The prophet answered, "If thou wouldst give me half thine house I would not go with thee; for so it was charged me by the Lord my God; eat no bread, drink no water, and return home by another way from that thou camest."

When the people dispersed, the two sons of a man claiming to be a prophet, told their father all that had occurred. He was indignant that any one should call himself prophet in his city, and resolved to compass his destruction. "Saddle me an ass!" he cried; and when one was brought he set out after Jadon, and found him resting under an oak. "Come home with me, my brother, and eat bread," he said. "Not so," replied Jadon, "I was commanded not to eat nor drink in the idolatrous city." "Nay, I am a prophet, as thou art, and worship God as thou

dost, and he sent me to thee to make thee my guest!" Jadon, instead of following the commands of God, weakly consented to go with the false prophet to his house. After securing his victim, by inducing him to eat and to drink, while yet they were at table, the malicious false prophet cried out, in words which were put in his mouth: "Hear now the word of the Lord, Jadon! Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept his commandment, but hast come back, and hast eaten bread, and drunk water in the place which the Lord did say to thee, *eat no bread and drink no water*, thou shalt die by the way, and thy carcase shall not lie in the sepulchre of thy fathers!"

The unhappy Jadon sat stupefied during this address; he saw he had been deluded; he had not obeyed his God, and now must suffer the punishment of his folly.

In silence, without a word of reproach, Jadon mounted his ass and slowly left the city, every moment expecting some dreadful event by which his forfeit life should be ended. Soon it came—from behind a rock at the road-side, sprang

out a monstrous lion, and seizing the prophet, dragged him from his ass!

Jadon was dead; but the beast was not commissioned to do more, and now stood motionless beside his body. The ass also stood gazing mournfully upon his master. Some passers by, beheld the extraordinary sight, and rushing into the city, spread the news around. Crowds came forth, as near as they dare, and gazed upon this wondrous spectacle—the three still together, and the lion, by some power, forbidden to tear the man. Now came forward the false prophet, and saw that the words he had spoken were from on high, to punish the faithless Jadon.

“It is the prophet of Judah,” he said, “he was disobedient to the words of the Lord, therefore the Lord hath delivered him to the lion!” Great fear fell upon all. The false prophet felt remorse for the part he had played in this woeful tragedy, and hastened to bury him as some reparation. Jadon was laid upon his ass, when the lion, as released from a spell, fled to the woods. In mournful procession, they returned to the city, and Jadon was buried in the sepulchre of the old prophet.

He turned to his sons—"this was of truth, a man sent by God, and all that he said of future wo will happen when I am dead and buried beside him."

All these events, however, did not affect Jero-boam. He still continued his false worship, and was again tried by reverses. The war with Abijam has been related above. This defeat still failing to turn his heart, he was attacked in his own family. His favorite son and heir, Abijah, fell ill; and, as everything had failed to restore him, the king conjured his wife to go to the prophet Ahijah, and ask him to entreat the child's life of the Lord.

"He is offended with me for what he calls my apostacy," said the king, "and peradventure may not listen to thee; therefore disguise thyself and ask as for a stranger's son."

With a small train the queen set forth for Shiloh, and, when near the prophet's abode, alighted from her ass, and plainly clothed entered the house. But Ahijah was a true prophet, and the Lord had told him of her approach and gave him a message for her.

The old and blind prophet heard the sound

of her feet as she entered and called out ; “ Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou to be another? Enter, for thou must hear heavy tidings !”

With her head weighed down by humiliation and despair, the woful wife and mother heard the doom of her house pronounced from on high ! “ Go tell Jeroboam,” said the prophet, “ Thus saith the Lord God of Israel. I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over Israel, which I rent away from the house of David ; but as I gave, so will I take away ; thy house shall be destroyed, and Israel shall be shaken as a reed is shaken in the waters ; and God shall root up Israel from this good land which he gave their fathers, and these ten tribes shall be scattered beyond the river. This evil shall befall because of the sin of Jeroboam and of Israel, who made images and worshipped them ! Arise ! therefore, and return to thy house, —when thou enterest it thy child will die. Rejoice that he dieth in his bed, and is buried by his people, for the sons of Jeroboam shall be torn by dogs and the fowls of the air !” Sadly the unhappy queen returned to Tirzah where the

king impatiently awaited her. As she stepped upon the threshold of the palace, the beloved child, the royal heir, passed away.

Of the grief of Jeroboam there is nothing told us; but as he died not long after, we may suppose his haughty spirit was crushed at last, and his life was shortened by sorrow. Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years.



Nadab, King of Israel.

EVENTS were not yet ripe for the overthrow of the house of Jeroboam, and his son Nadab was allowed to ascend the throne. His reign, however, only continued two years. Truly his days were few and evil. He was a worshipper of the golden calves. While with his army before the city of Gibbethon, where he went to fight the Philistines, he was treacherously slain by one of his officers, named Baasha. He was left unburied, and deserted by his countrymen, who followed the usurper, and placed him upon the throne of Israel.

Baasha, King of Israel.

THE prophecy was fulfilled; as the prophet Ahijah had foretold, the throne had passed from the family of Jeroboam. The remnant of his kindred who were not slain in battle, were murdered by the usurper Baasha. He was the instrument of vengeance sent by the Almighty to the sinning Jeroboam. But no feeling of awe, nor fear for himself seems to have agitated his bosom; he gave not God the praise, but claimed the triumph as proof of his own sagacity.

A gracious warning came to him from on high, as it had to Jeroboam. Jehu, the son of Hanani the prophet, was commissioned to reprove him. He claimed an interview, and delivered his message.

Baasha was reminded that he was taken from the dust, and exalted to be a prince over Israel. "But thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam,"

said the prophet, 'and hast made my people to sin. Behold then, I will take away the succession from the house of Baasha. Him that dieth of his posterity in the city, the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth of his in the field shall the fowls of the air eat!' His reign was a long one, and all we learn of it was, that wars between him and Asa, king of Judah were frequent. How he died is not mentioned: he reigned twenty-four years.

Elah, King of Israel.

LITTLE heeding the prophecies against the race of Baasha, his son Elah ascended the throne, and took up his abode in the beautiful city of Tirzah. His reign was, however, short: the siege of the city of Gibbethon was fatal to him, as it had been to the son of Jeroboam. The army of Israel was encamped against it, but its king was reveling in his royal palace at Tirzah.

The army murmured at the desertion of its king, and Zimri, a bold man, and a military commander, having half the king's chariots in his power, fermented this discontent. He succeeded in being proclaimed king, and led his bands against his master Elah. The unhappy son of Baasha, was surprised in a drunken bout, at the house of his steward Arra, and murdered. He had reigned but two years.



Zimri, King of Israel.

THIS murderer of his master, and usurper of his throne reigned but seven days.

His time was employed in the destruction of all the house of Baasha, and even his kinsfolk. The avenger however was soon at his heels.

When tidings came to the remainder of the army that Zimri had slain the king, and reigned in his stead, they were indignant. Omri commander of the hosts, who secretly desired the

crown, was loudest in his displeasure, and succeeded in gaining a large part of the soldiers over to him. He was proclaimed king, and set out to attack Zimri. The rest of the army, with a captain called Tibni at its head, followed to succor Zimri. They were not in time, however, to avert his fate; for while closely besieged in his palace by Omri, he set fire to the building, and perished in the flames.



Omri, King of Israel

DURING five years of the reign of this prince, Israel was desolated by civil war. The party of Tibni had crowned him king, and kept possession of several strong-holds, but at last were routed in battle and Tibni was slain.

Omri distinguished himself by building the famous city of Samaria, so long the rival of Jerusalem.

In his wars with Tibni, the city of Tirzah had

been nearly destroyed, and the palace had been burned by Zimri. Therefore Omri purchased the hill of Samaria for two talents of silver, and erected a city. Its situation was beautiful; crowning the summit of a hill, around which arose other hills, covered with terraces, upon which were grown rich fruits and vegetables. Oh, that these magnificent halls and colonnades were erected to the honor of the Lord of Israel! Instead, the temples of Baal and other idols glittered in the sun of Palestine. After an evil reign of twelve years, Omri died and was buried in his royal city of Samaria.

Jehashaphat, King of Judah.

TURN we from the record of the crimes of Israel, to the peaceful days of the pious king of Judah. During the reign of this illustrious prince, religion and the laws were honored, and the affairs of the kingdom were established upon

a footing which had not been seen since the days of Solomon.

To secure the peace of his country, Jehoshaphat sent garrisons to all the cities on his border, and thus kept the Israelites in check, as well as other enemies. He also increased the army, and arranged it under several captains around Jerusalem. His next step was to attend to the cause of religion, which had not flourished much in the former reigns. Jehoshaphat sought the Lord God of his fathers, and walked in his commandments, therefore the Lord was with him, and disposed the hearts of his people, and the neighboring nations towards him. So great was the fear with which his vigorous military measures inspired the neighboring nations, that they eagerly sought by presents to gain his good will. The Philistines sent him silver as tribute-money, and the Arabs, numerous flocks of sheep and goats.

Although this good prince saw himself thus honored, and surrounded by riches and a loving people, he took not the glory upon himself, but acknowledged the goodness of God towards him.

The remnant of the graves and high places

were destroyed; the temple and ceremonial law was resorted to with reverence. Not content that all around him should enjoy the comforts of religious knowledge, he sent messengers to the country to disseminate the knowledge of the law. Jehoshaphat did not intrust the high interest to inferior agents, but commissioned five princes to go themselves to the people. Behold, then, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nathaniel, and Michaiah, princes of the court, leaving their lofty halls, and attended by nine Levites carrying the *Law* to all the inhabitants of the land! It was read to them, explained by the Levites, and expounded by the princes. Such missionaries could not fail to be listened to, and light was dispensed, and the fear of the Lord fell upon the land.

The one fault of the reign of this great and good prince, was his league with Ahab the wicked king of Israel. His ardent wish for peace in the land led him into this error, and overclouded his judgment. But Jehoshaphat was at last convinced there could be no peace with the wicked, for he was drawn in to join with Ahab and attack the Syrians, enemies of

Israel. His repentance, however, did not avert his punishment.

The battle of Ramoth-gilead will be related in the life of Ahab.

Jehoshaphat narrowly escaping slaughter, returned to his city of Jerusalem. Although sad when he thought of the fate of Ahab, yet he supposed he had done his duty to assist a neighbor and ally when in danger. Of his error, he was, however, reminded soon; for before the city gate, he beheld Jehu, son of the prophet Hanani, his arms folded and his head drooping mournfully. Then did the heart of Jehoshaphat sink within him,—“It is a messenger from the Lord!” he exclaimed. “Aye,” said Jehu, “thou hast helped the ungodly, shouldst thou love them that hate the Lord? For that thou hast done this, the Lord will stir up the nations of the Moabites and Ammonites to attack thee! Thy punishment, however, will not be heavy, for thou hast destroyed the groves of the idols, and thy heart is inclined towards thy God.” The seer turned away, and the king slowly and sadly sought his royal palace.

Jehoshaphat did not sit idly down, but went

throughout his land to inspect the people, and enjoin upon them fear of the Lord. More judges were appointed, that the people might not suffer from injustice, and to these Jehoshaphat said: "Take heed what ye do; for ye act not to please the people, but the Lord, who is with you and will help you; wherefore let his fear be upon you. There is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor taking of gifts." Happy the land with so wise and pious a ruler! When the king returned to Jerusalem he formed there a court of judicature of a higher order, over which presided princes, levites, and priests. Here ecclesiastical and political causes were heard.

This high court was opened by the king, who addressed them upon their duties, ending thus: "I leave Amariah, the high-priest, as chief judge of all matters relating to religion; and Zebadiah, prince of the house of Judah, as chief judge of all civil matters, or things pertaining to the royal family. The Levites shall be officers of other causes. Deal faithfully, then, in the fear of the Lord, and with a clean heart. What cause soever that your brethren shall bring before you; of law, of commandments, of

statutes, or judgments; ye shall tell them of the right, and warn them not to trespass against the laws of the Lord. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the well-doer."

Jehoshaphat, the king, rested in peace in his palace, and all was quiet around him. He remembered, however, the words of the seer, and knew that for songs of joy, he must soon exchange the wild cry of battle. But he bowed his head in resignation, and said: "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good." He did not long wait, for messengers came upon fleet camels to the city, giving notice that a great army of Moabites, Ammonites, and others, were hovering upon the borders of the Dead Sea ready to invade his kingdom. And what did Jehoshaphat do? Did he bid them send out warriors of might, and to man the battlements? No, he knew this came from the hands of the Lord, and him he sought the first.

A *Fast* was proclaimed throughout Judah, and the people were called to the temple to humble themselves before their God. The people flocked to Jerusalem, and the city and temple were filled. Silence reigned. In the highest

court of the temple, conspicuous to all, surrounded by priests and Levites, knelt the king of Judah with his hands raised in an appeal to God for his humbled people. And he said:

“O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God of the Heavens? and rulest thou not over the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thy hand is there not power and might, that none is able to withstand thee? Yea, thou art our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham forever! and they dwelt therein, and have built thee this sanctuary for thy name, so that when evil cometh upon us—as the sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we could stand in this house, in thy presence, and cry unto thee in our affliction. Now then hear, and help us! Behold the children of Ammon, and Moab, have come to cast us out of thy possession which thou hast given us to inherit! O God, wilt thou not judge them? We have no might against this great company that cometh against us. We know not what to do; our eyes are upon thee for help in this great danger!”

Jehoshaphat ceased; the men of Judah, with their wives and little ones, knelt in silence around. Then stood forth a Levite to give to the people a message from their Lord! King and priest were set aside, and the spirit descended upon Jahaziel, a Levite of the house of Asaph! a thing that had not been seen before among the Hebrews.

“Hearken ye, all Judah!” said the Levite, “and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat! thus saith the Lord to you: ‘Be not afraid, nor dismayed by reason of this multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.’ To-morrow go ye down against them. Behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz. Ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle, but set yourselves in array, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, O Judah and Jerusalem!” The seer ceased. King Jehoshaphat bowed his head in reverence, and prostrated himself before his Lord, while all the people knelt in silence around. Then all arose, and the air was filled with shouting, and by the voices of the Levites and the Korhites, who

sang the praise of the Lord God of Israel ; and the sound of their silver trumpets went out over the city.

Early the next morning Jehoshaphat and his army set out. There might have been some among them who doubted the prophecy ; and to avert such thoughts the king addressed them, charging them to "*believe* in the Lord your God, so shall you be established : *believe* his prophets, so ye shall prosper."

Thus went forth in strong faith, the men of Judah, accompanied with bands of sacred singers, whose refrain—praise the Lord : for his mercy endureth forever—was caught up by Olivet and re-echoed upon the hill of Zion.

The cliff of Ziz was gained, and the watch tower ascended—what saw they then ? was the word of the Lord sure and steadfast altogether ? —yea, instead of fierce and restless bands of men, lo ! the shores of the Dead Sea, and the plain beyond, were strewn with the dead ! The enemy was vanquished ! Hidden in their different ambushes, they had heard the tramp of the hosts of Judah, and each running out slaughtered many of each other's troops, and the remainder fled. The army of Jehoshaphat descend

ed and gathered much spoil in jewels and gold.

Upon the fourth day they assembled in a valley, and in prayer and solemn praises acknowledged the blessings showered upon them by the Lord. (This valley henceforth received the name of Berachah, or blessing.) Thus they returned to Jerusalem rejoicing, and ascended to the temple with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets.

When the kingdoms around heard all that God had done for Judah, His fear fell upon them, and the realm of Jehoshaphat was in peace.

There is very little more to relate of the life of this good king. Eagerness to bring treasure to his people by extending his commerce, led him into one error in the latter years of his life, when his judgment became dim. He sent ships to Tarshish; and after refusing the king of Israel's request to let him join in this trade, at length was overpersuaded to admit him to a share. He was, however, soon reproved for this by Eliezer, a prophet, who foretold the ships would be destroyed "because he joined himself with Ahasiah, wicked king of Israel!" The prophe-

cy was true—the ships were wrecked in the Red Sea.

Jehoshaphat died at the age of sixty. His mother's name was Azuba. When he ascended the throne he had attained the age of thirty-five, and consequently reigned twenty-five years. He had seven sons, whose names are given as: Jehoram, Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah again, Michael, Shephatiah. To Jehoram the first born, was left the throne; but the others were enriched with silver and gold, and made governors over the cities of Judah.

Jehoshaphat was buried in state with his fathers, in the tombs of the kings in the city of David.



Ahab, the wicked, King of Israel.

ALTHOUGH to many kings of Israel might the *sobriquet* of *wicked* belong, yet to Ahab it is given for pre-eminence in evil. The sin of Jeroboam in making golden calves is great, but

Ahab threw off even this semblance of Jehovah's worship. His wife, perhaps, may have first led him into sin, for he married Jezebel, daughter of the idolatrous king of Sidon. Groves were planted over the land, statues raised to Baal, or the sun, and altars raised to Astarte, the goddess of the moon. Ahab was son of Omri, and we are told, "did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel, than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

In mercy to his subjects, and to check this bad man in his career of wickedness, the illustrious prophet Elijah was divinely commissioned to deal with him. His words were unheeded, so Elijah departed with this thrilling prophecy; "As the Lord of Israel liveth, and is not formed of wood, there shall not be rain nor dew these three years upon the land, unless thou repentest and prayest to Jehovah for help!"

Elijah then fled from the wrath of Ahab, to the brook Cherith, where he, by God's command, remained in prayer for the people, that this terrible drought and consequent famine might bring them to consider their ways and repent. He was furnished with bread miraculously. Soon

a lament arose from Samaria—the waters in that city and the land of king Ahab gradually dried up, and a famine was threatened. Even the brook Cherith was dry, and Elijah was told to seek refreshment from a poor widow of Zarephath.

This poor woman, living in the idolatrous country of Zidon, was selected of all the land to minister to the prophet. She had rejected Baal, and was a worshipper of Jehovah, and there received the holy man with joy. She was gathering sticks outside the city to cook her last portion of meal with her last drop of oil, for Zidon, being the country of Jezebel, queen to Ahab, the curse had extended over it.

“Fetch me, I pray thee,” said Elijah, “a little water in a vessel, and with it a morsel of bread.” “As the Lord, thy God, liveth,” she replied, sorrowfully, “I have no bread, but only a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and behold I am gathering sticks that I may cook it for me and my son, that we may eat our last meal.” The prophet, willing to try her faith, said, “Fear not; go and do as thou hast said, but make a little cake for me first, and

afterwards one for thyself and son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, 'The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.' " And she went and did all the prophet asked of her, not doubting his divine commission. According to her faith, it was done to her, and she and all her household, and the prophet, had food enough, and "the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail," according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Elijah.

Soon after, their peace was broken by a dreadful event—the widow's son, after a short illness, died! For one moment she feared it was a judgment upon her by Elijah, for her former sin of idolatry, and cried out, "Art thou come here, O man of God, to remind me of my sin? and for it to slay my son?" But she was soon reassured, for the prophet said,—“Give me thy son and I will restore him.” Elijah was much troubled in heart at this sad event, and with the young lad in his arms ascended to his own apartment, and laid him on his bed. He then cried unto the Lord, saying, “O Lord, my God!

hast thou returned this widow's goodness to me by slaying her son? O Lord, my God! I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again!" He then, after prayer, took what means he deemed proper to restore circulation, and soon the lad revived. Doubting and trembling, awaited below the sorrowing widow,—what sees she? her son smiling in life, brought down by the prophet, who placed him in her willing arms, saying, with joy, "See, thy son liveth!" And the woman with a burst of rejoicing faith cried, "Now, by this I know, that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth!"

In the meanwhile much consternation prevailed in the court of Ahab. In this extremity, he found his own priests were useless, and sought out Obadiah, the only prophet of the Lord remaining when Jezebel cut off the prophets. There were others alive, hid in a cave, and fed by Obadiah. A great drought had prevailed, all grass and corn were dead, and Ahab sent Obadiah forth saying, "Go out over the land, seek for fountains, and bring water and grass to save the horses and mules alive that we lose not

all the beasts as well as the people. And seek also Elijah, that he may give us rain." I, myself, will go also. Elijah had been told to go to Samaria, and rain should again fall at his bidding.

The two prophets met. Obadiah, overjoyed to behold again the great Elijah, prostrated himself before him, exclaiming, "Do I indeed see my lord, Elijah!" "Yes, I am here," replied the prophet, "go and tell Ahab Elijah has returned." "Alas, Ahab hath sent into every city in search of thee, and visited with his anger every ruler who could not find thee. It may come to pass that when I am gone the spirit of the Lord shall carry thee away, so that when Ahab comes, and thou art not here, he will slay me." "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand," replied Elijah, "I will surely show myself unto him this day!"

With this assurance, Obadiah departed, and finding Ahab near brought him into the presence of the prophet. The two contending powers were together face to face; the one wielding an earthly sceptre, and the other possessing power given him from on high.

With a haughty frown, king Ahab began,—
“Art thou he that troubleth Israel!” “I have not troubled Israel,” the prophet said, “but thou and thy father’s house in that ye have forsaken the commandments of God, and worshiped Baal. Know you not how powerless he is, and how great is our God!” Ahab seemed struck dumb and answered not.

“Bring forth your priests, and I will meet them,—I alone, not even Obadiah with me, and send out all the prophets of Baal whom the queen doth pamper at her table, and it will soon be seen who is the true God!” To this proposal Ahab assented, and Mount Carmel, in the lot of Asher, in the north, was arranged as the place of meeting.

At the appointed day, two altars were seen upon the summit of the mount; around one were assembled the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, clad in their robes of black. At the other side stood the prophet Elijah, in a flowing white robe: the altar beside him was once dedicated to Jehovah, and was repaired by Elijah, with twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel. Ahab and his court were seated in the

midst, while around the mount, its sides, and its foot, were collected dense masses of the people.

Elijah came forward,—“How long will ye halt between two opinions?” he asked in a loud tone. “If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him. This question will soon be tried, for here. I stand alone in the name of Jehovah, to prove Him the true God, opposed to the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal.”

No one answered him a word, but watched, doubtingly, what he would next do.

The prophet then caused two bullocks to be brought, and gave the choice to the priests of Baal. Each party then cut the bullocks into pieces and piled them upon sticks of wood laid upon the altars. Jehovah and Baal were to be supplicated, and the first whose sacrifices should be burnt, should be called the true God. The prophets of Baal piled up their pieces of slain bullock. Then they called aloud upon Baal—but he heard not—again they called, and went through all the services of their peculiar worship: hours passed, and still Baal gave no answer. “Cry aloud,” said Elijah, with derision, “your god is on a journey or sleeping, and must be

awakened." Rendered furious by this ridicule in which the people joined, the priests of Baal jumped on the altar, stamping, cutting themselves, until they presented a miserable figure, covered with blood and yelling like maniacs,—
"Baal, hear us! O Baal, help us!"

The time allotted them had passed; no voice answered them, no fire illumined their altar, and with shame they were obliged to desist.

Elijah then called to the people—"Come near, O people and behold the token of God's presence!" The people sent some of their number to assist him, and then stood eagerly watching him. The wood was piled upon the altar, and the sacrifice placed upon it. Four barrels of water were then poured upon it until the whole was thoroughly drenched that the miracle of burning might be undisputed. Three times was the water poured over, and running down filled a trench which had been dug to hold it.

It was the hour of evening sacrifice at Jerusalem, when all was finished, and Elijah knelt before the altar, and addressed this prayer to Jehovah. "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou

alone art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy command! Hear me, O Lord, hear me! that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, that their hearts may be turned back again to thee!" He ceased—awful expectations sat upon each upraised brow, when with a sudden flash, flames from heaven descended upon the altar—the sacrifice was consumed, and with it the wood, the stones, and even the water in the trench! Then all the people fell prostrate crying out, The Lord, he is the true God; the Lord he is the God!

"Seize the false prophets!" cried Elijah with a terrible voice; and they were all suddenly surrounded, carried struggling away, and slain. Elijah then turned to Ahab, who was crouching in fear at the prophet's feet. "Get thee up," he said,—"**eat and drink**, for there is a sound of abundance of rain." Elijah again prostrated himself in prayer for rain, and looking up asked his servant if any came. None was seen however, and the prayer of the prophet was not answered so quickly as before, probably lest the prophet should be a prey to pride, if too successful.

Seven times was the servant sent to look out from Carmel, and not until the seventh was there any hope given. Then at last the servant reported, "Behold there ariseth a little cloud out of the Mediterranean sea, like a man's hand." Elijah arose and said to Ahab—"Go down and get thee quickly into thy chariot and drive home, lest the rain stop thee." Black clouds rapidly covered the skies, a strong wind blew—Ahab and the people hastened towards Jezreel, and Elijah, to prove his loyalty and humility, ran as a footman before the king. As they entered the city a heavy rain fell, rejoicing the people and the thirsty land.

Could it be believed that after such decided proofs of a living deity, and such awful demonstrations of his power, that any unbeliever could be found! There however was one, and she the highest in the land, and who should stand as a light to direct the rest! Jezebel the Queen, plunged in the darkness of idolatry, believed or feigned to believe, the whole a scene got up by witchcraft, and that Elijah had deceived the people.

✓ In vain had Ahab told her of all the prophet

had done; she only knew that her priests were slain. "Tell him," she exclaimed in rage, "so let the Lord do to me, and more, if I make not his life as the life of one of them before to-morrow!"

Elijah was told of this, and privately left the city. He walked a day's journey, and then, fatigued and desponding that all he had done seemed in vain while Jezebel ruled, he laid himself down and wished for death, saying, "I have done all I could, now, O Lord, take away my life. I am no better than my fathers." He slept under a juniper tree, and when he awakened beheld food provided by angels for him; and a voice said: "Arise and eat, for a long journey is before thee!" Thus divinely assisted he journeyed to mount Horeb and took up his abode in a cave, thus hastily leaving the court and people, where so much remained for him to do. The voice of the Lord came to the prophet while alone in his vast solitude on the sides of Mount Horeb. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" it asked. The prophet answered by justifying himself: "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy

covenant, thrown down thy altars and slain and dispersed thy prophets, and I only am left, and my life they seek to take it away." "Go forth," said the voice, "stand upon the summit of the mount of the Lord, and the Lord will pass by and tell thee what will come to Israel."

Elijah stood alone on the crest of Sinai. A terrible wind came, rending the mountain and crushing the tumbling rocks around. The prophet wrapped his face in his mantle and listened, but the Lord was not in the tempest. After the wind was an earthquake, and the hills shook, and the dreadful sound went roaring from mount to mount, and echoed and was lost away in the wide stretching deserts: but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, which wildly flashed in the air around, but the Lord was not in the fire: for the Lord speaks only to his enemies in tempest and thunder; after the fire came a *still small voice*, and then the prophet knew the Lord was speaking. The voice said to him again, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Again he answered and told of his efforts to uphold his name in Israel, and was forced to fly for his life. Elijah

was then told of the fearful punishment coming upon Ahab, and Jezebel, and all disbelieving Israel, by Jehu and Hazael who were to be anointed as kings. The heart of the prophet was however comforted by the assurance that there were seven thousand in Israel whose knees had never bowed to Baal and who should be saved. Elijah departed from the mount, and first sought Elisha, whom he believed a proper person to assist him in executing the commissions given him from on high.

Elisha was a husbandman, and with his oxen was at work when summoned by Elijah to follow him. "Let me but kiss my mother, and my father, and I will follow thee." These duties fulfilled, he slew his oxen, made a fire of their yokes and ploughs, cooked them, gave to Elijah, and the rest was given to his family and neighbors as a farewell feast, and the two prophets set out on their mission.

The next event in the life of Ahab is the invasion of his land by the Syrians.

Ben-hadad, king of Syria, by a sudden inroad reduced the country to submission as far as the city of Samaria: seated before which he sent a

proud demand to Ahab, for "his silver and gold, his wives, and his children." The weak Ahab was dismayed at the power of Ben-hadad, who came with a large army; thirty-two allied kings and their power, and numerous chariots and horses. He submitted at once, and returned answer;—"My lord and king, according to thy demand, I am thine and all that I have." Elated by this ready compliance with what was only meant as a threat, Ben-hadad grew bolder and sent another messenger to tell Ahab that, "tomorrow, about this time, I will send my servants to search thy house, and that of the citizens, and take away all of thine that is the most pleasant, and the goodliest!"

At this insolent message, the poor king of Israel was so disturbed that he sent for his elders, and in full council demanded their advice. "Mark, I pray you," said Ahab, "how bent upon our destruction is this man! When he sent, as a proof of my submission, to say he had power over all I possessed, I denied him not, thinking he would take my submission, for tribute and depart: and now he comes to rifle all our houses for all our treasures, even

perhaps, for our maidens." The elders were indignant at these insults, and with the people around cried out; "Hearken not unto him! consent not to his impudent demands!"

Acting upon this advice, Ahab sent to Ben-hadad to refuse his last insulting demand. The scornful reply to Ahab was,—“The gods so do unto me, and more also, if I do not so destroy Samaria that its dust will not suffice for a handful for each of my soldiers!” The king of Israel answered the messenger by the pertinent saying; “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast as he that putteth it off.” When he heard this message, the wrath of Ben-hadad was great; he arose from the table where he and his allied kings were carousing, and cried out with a loud voice,—“Set yourselves in array! Advance to the city!” and soon the armed masses were in motion, covering the hills around Samaria. While the weak Ahab sat hopelessly expecting the approach of his enemy, a prophet, some think Obadiah, stood before him. “I have a message to thee, O Ahab, from the Lord,” he said. “Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude that approacheth? Behold

I will deliver it unto thy hand this day, and thou shalt know that I am the only God."

"Whom shall I send to gain this great victory," asked Ahab. "Even by the sons and servants of the princes who rule the provinces; not the rulers themselves." "Who shall order the battle?" The prophet answered, "Thou, O king."

Ahab believed the prophet. He arose, and issued orders, and in a short time a little band was gathered, consisting of seven thousand servants, and one hundred sons of the princes of the provinces. The young noblemen acting as captains, and king Ahab as general over them.

The king of Syria at his noonday meal was holding revel with his kings, and "drinking himself drunk;" when he was told that troops were coming out from Samaria. His drunken orders were "whether they come out in peaceful submission, or whether they come out for war, take them alive!"

He soon found that he was fighting a more powerful king than Ahab, for the sounds of war and terror were heard approaching, his soldiers were seen pressed back as by a victorious band,

and he at last was called to flee for his life. Trembling now with fear, Ben-hadad mounted his horse and fled. Ahab, the conqueror, came rushing on, urged by the words of a prophet who had told him to be sure and destroy Ben-hadad, or he would return by the end of the year.

Ben-hadad, however, did escape, and Ahab returned crowned with victory and possessed of rich booty.

The words of the prophet were fulfilled, and the king of Syria came out of his country again, for he had been foolishly counselled.

"The Gods of the Israelites," said his advisers, "are Gods of the hills alone, and therefore they prevailed against us; let us then fight them in the plain, and our gods will then be strongest." And as they probably thought he and his kings spent too much time feasting, he was advised to leave them behind and put captains in their place.

An army of horses and chariots, and men well commanded, were gathered, and the Syrians encamped on a plain near the city of Aphek. Ahab was encouraged again by the prophet, who gave him this message by divine command;

"The Syrians have said, the Lord is God of the hills, and not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude and their king into thy hand, and all shall know that I am the Lord!"

Accordingly, Ahab again went forth with two slender bands which looked upon the plain like two flocks of goats. The Syrians rushed forth expecting soon to slay them, but found they fought against a rock; and after being slaughtered in great numbers fled into the city of Aphek. There, also, Divine vengeance pursued them, and the city wall fell upon and destroyed the remaining twenty-seven thousand.

Ben-hadad, and a few personal followers were alone saved, and were concealed in a chamber. Here, plunged in grief and terror, they sat, not knowing which way to fly. At last one of the men said to the king;—"We have heard that the kings of the Israelites are merciful kings; let us then, I pray thee, put sackcloth upon our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel, and peradventure he will save thy life." To this, as his only resource, the humbled king assented.

King Ahab was surrounded by his people congratulating him, and rejoicing in his victory. It was in this happy mood that he saw the followers of the conquered king approach and kneel clothed in sackcloth.

"Thy servant Ben-hadad sayeth," they said, in abject manner, "I pray thee, let me live!" Ahab forgot the command of the prophet to slay Ben-hadad. He only remembered his former position and his present strait, and was struck with pity. He is a brother king, he thought—I may some day be as low as he is. "Is he yet alive?" he asked of the men; and then murmured to himself, "he is my brother." The Syrians, who were watching him eagerly, caught at the word, and said, "Ay, thy *brother* Ben-hadad is alive." Ahab weakly relented. "Go and bring him," he said. The once haughty Ben-hadad, king of Syria, now came humbly forth, and was assisted up into the chariot beside Ahab, where a conference took place. An agreement was entered into: the life of the Syrian was granted him, and he gave up to Ahab, the cities which had been taken from Israel by his father; also he promised to allot certain

streets, in his royal city of Damascus, where the Israelites might carry on their trade.

While the two kings were thus in friendly treaty, a prophet was commissioned to tell Ahab of the error he had committed by not killing Ben-hadad, and to pronounce his punishment.

This the prophet commenced to do, by the mysterious manner often used by them. He turned to a son of the prophet near him, and said, "Smite me, I pray thee." The man refused, notwithstanding it was a prophet that asked. "Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord," said the prophet, "behold, as soon as thou hast departed from me, a lion shall slay thee by the way." (This punishment did happen to the man afterwards). He then asked another, who believed it was from the Lord, and struck him with some instrument and wounded him. Thus, wounded and bleeding, with his head bound up as one just come from battle, he sought the king, as he was on his way to Samaria. He approached, and the king stopped to hear his petition. "Thy servant went out to the battle," he said, "and a man brought me a prisoner of rank and said, 'Guard this man; if by any

means he is missing, then shall thy life go for his life, or else thou shalt pay me a talent of silver.' As thy servant was busily occupied, the man escaped—must I then pay the silver?" "Yea," said the king, "thou hast erred and must pay." He then threw off his bandages, and the king knew the prophet, and trembled with fear. "Thus saith the Lord, O Ahab," cried the holy man, "because thou hast let go out of thy hand, a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people."

King Ahab rode on, and entered his house gloomy and displeased.

Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, has been mentioned above, and, from thence, a glimpse of her cruel character may be gained. Daughter of an idolator, she looked upon the Israelite people as heretics, and only fit to be trodden under foot. These traits of her character are vividly shown in the story of Naboth. This unfortunate man possessed a vineyard which adjoined the grounds of Ahab's palace, in the city of Jezreel. This vineyard, Ahab offered to purchase, that he might make it a garden; but Naboth refused to

sell. Ahab persisted ; Naboth continued firm, —“for it is the inheritance of my fathers,” he said.

Ahab was not used to disappointments, and this preyed upon his weak mind until he became ill. His wife Jezebel sought him while lying in this mood upon his bed. “Why is thy spirit so sad, Ahab,” she said, “why eatest thou not ?” “I am sore vexed,” he answered, sullenly : “I have asked Naboth for his vineyard, and he refuses to sell it me.” Jezebel gazed upon him with the utmost scorn. “What ! art thou the ruler of Israel, or is Naboth !” she said. “Arise ! eat bread, and be merry. I will give thee the vineyard of this insolent man !” and Jezebel swept haughtily out of the apartment, to send out her cruel orders. She wrote letters to the elders and nobles in the king’s name, and sealed with his signet, accusing Naboth of a great crime ; and desiring a public fast to be proclaimed about the city, that divine vengeance might be averted. After the fast, Naboth was brought forth before the assembled people, accused by two hired witnesses, of certain crimes ; convicted by the fearful judges who dared not refuse Jezebel’s

commands. Then this poor victim of absolute power was carried out of the city, and with his sons stoned to death. Ahab hastened and took possession of his blood-bought garden.

Such high-handed wickedness could not go unproved by the Lord who watched over his chosen people. King Ahab was walking in the vineyard, pleasantly occupied with new arrangements, when lifting his head he saw the prophet Elijah standing with folded arms, gazing sternly at him. "So! thou hast killed and taken possession!" he said. "But the Lord saith to thee, thus: In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood—ay, even thine, O king!" "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy," said the dejected Ahab. "I have found thee, and I tell thee, because thou hast worked this evil in the sight of the Lord, he will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off all bearing relation to thee. Thy house shall share the fate of the house of Jeroboam, and the house of Baasha, who caused Israel to sin, of whom not one remaineth. The abominations of Jezebel thy wife shall also be visited on her head; the

dogs shall tear her body by the wall of Jezreel!" These dreadful words affected Ahab. He knew the power of the living God, and trembled before him. He rent his clothes, wore only a dress of coarse sackcloth, and humbled himself before the Lord. This conduct averted the evil to his house until after his death.

It was during the reign of this wicked king, that a prophecy was fulfilled which had been upon the Jewish records for four hundred and forty years. No reader of this wondrous book from which these memoirs are collected, can have forgotten the fall of Jericho,—that awful demonstration of the power of a present deity! Against the devoted city of idolators, no arm was raised, no human force used—seven days the numerous hosts of warriors, and solemn train of priests with the holy ark, marched around the doomed city, in silence, unbroken save by the trumpet's warning note! Seven days continued this funeral march; on the seventh, one mighty shout went up from all the hosts, and with a sounding crash the walls of Jericho laid low! Over the ruins of the city, Joshua pronounced a curse "upon the man that

raiseth up and buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof on his first-born, and on his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." So plunged in wickedness was the Israelite nation; that this warning was unheeded, and a man by the name of Hiel, of the city of Bethel, dared to rebuild Jericho. When the foundation was laid, his eldest son Abiram died—still he went on—then his other sons died; but being an idolator he scorned to cease; it was finished and the gates set up, and then perished his youngest child Segah, and the curse of Joshua had fallen!

We come now to the closing scenes in the life of king Ahab. The king of Judah will also appear in events alluded to, while narrating his life. Jehoshaphat, as we have seen, committed the very great error of allying himself with Ahab. At this time, he came down in state, with his son and successor, Jehoram: who was then married to Athaliah, daughter of Ahab. The remembrance of our fallen nature is constantly needed, while reading the story of this unhappy nation of Hebrews. With God's prophets constantly around them to warn and to re-

prove, they commit the most unexpected errors. Who could imagine that the pious Jehoshaphat would marry his son to the daughter of the wicked and idolatrous Ahab and Jezebel? yet such was the fact. His punishment we have seen above; but the disastrous consequences to his descendants have yet to appear.

Ahab took advantage of the visit of the king of Judah, to persuade him to join him in his meditated attack upon Syria. Having leagued himself with Ahab, Jehoshaphat's yielding nature induced him to consent; first stipulating that some prophets should enquire the will of God concerning the matter.

Oxen and sheep were slaughtered, a great feast was held in the ivory palace of Ahab, and then the two kings went to the place of council and public assembly; the gate of Samaria. Seated each upon his throne the people around them, they received the four hundred priests of Ahab. The king of Israel then demanded; "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I forbear?"

"Go up!" said the priests, for the Lord of Israel shall deliver it into the hand of the Lord

the king. Jehoshaphat cared not to risk his fate upon the word of these priests, and asked ; "Is there not a prophet of Jehovah here that we may inquire of him?" "There is Micaiah, who is in prison," replied Ahab, "but him I hate, for he always prophesies evil regarding me." "Let not the king hate a prophet," said Jehoshaphat, "if he is truly inspired he is from God." To oblige his guest, Ahab sent an officer for Micaiah. On the way from prison the officer, who was an idolater and did not believe in Jehovah, said to the prophet, "I advise you to prophecy good to the king, for all the others have and it will be better for you, if you do so." "As the Lord liveth!" said Micaiah, "what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak!"

In the mean while the other prophets had been flattering the king by saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper." The Lord shall deliver the city to the king. Zedekiah the head-priest put two horns of iron upon his head ; meaning to represent Ahab and Jehoshaphat, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, with these shalt thou push the Syrians until they be destroyed!"

Thus encouraged Ahab was little inclined to

be guided by Micaiah, who now appeared before him; still he put to him the same questions: "Shall I go up to Ramoth Gilead to battle; or shall we forbear?"

Micaiah, knowing he should not be believed if he said otherwise, answered ironically, and mocking the tone of the others; "O yes—go up and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hands of the king!" Ahab knew he spoke in jest, and said impatiently, "How many times shall I adjure thee, to say only what thou believest true?"

Then the manner of the prophet changed, and spreading out his arms he said solemnly, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep, that have no shepherd: and the Lord said, these have no master; let them return every man to his home in peace!" The king of Israel turned to Jehoshaphat and said; "Did I not tell thee he would only prophecy evil concerning me?"

"Hear thou the word of the Lord!" said Micaiah. "I saw Jehovah sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left: and the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go

up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? and there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said, Where-with? and the spirit said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail, that his life may be for the life of the king of Syria whom he spared. Now therefore, O Ahab! there is a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets."

This accusation aroused the rage of the false prophets, and Zedekiah struck Micaiah on the cheek saying; "Which way went the spirit of Lord from me to speak unto thee?" "Behold, thou shalt know, in that day when thou fleest to hide thyself in an inner chamber!" said the prophet.

"Take Micaiah!" cried out Ahab, "carry him to prison and feed him with the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction, until I come in peace,"

"If thou return at all, in peace," said the prophet, "then the Lord hath not spoken by me." Turning to the assembly as he depart-

ed, the prophet, said, "Remember these words, O people!"

Jehoshaphat, unwilling to desert his ally and brother king, resolved to accompany him: determined also by the reflection that he was not spoken of by the prophet, for Micaiah had addressed Ahab alone.

The words of this prophet had disturbed Ahab, in spite of his treatment of him, and to avert the prophecy, and probably save his life, he disguised himself as a private soldier, leaving Jehoshaphat alone in his chariot on high. He might also have had a wicked hope of seizing the throne of Judah if its king perished.

The Syrians came forth in a great host to meet the armies of Israel and Judah. Ben-hadad, eager to slay Ahab, had enjoined upon his thirty-two captains, and commanders of the chariots, to "fight neither with great nor small, save only the king of Israel!"

Jehoshaphat, in his royal robes seated in his gilded chariot, and drawn by spirited war horses splendidly adorned, caught the eye at once of the Syrian captains, and they surrounded him. In this strait the king cried out to his God to

save him, and the Lord heard the prayer of this, his erring son. The Syrians became aware it was not Ahab, and remembering the words of their king, left him, to seek the king of Israel.

In vain had Ahab sought to conceal himself from God and avert his doom. His disguise baffled the Syrian captains, but a soldier drew his bow at venture—the arrow, Divinely directed, sped to its mark—the breast-plate of Ahab yielded, and the arrow entered his breast!

His strong will kept Ahab from publishing his fall. He directed one of his followers to carry him to his chariot, which stood afar from the battle; and there he had the courage to remain all day watching the battle while his life blood filled the chariot. The Syrians conquered—the allied armies fled—then died king Ahab, and his man carried him to his home in Samaria.

All the prophecy was fulfilled—the dogs lapped the blood of Ahab as the chariot was being washed in the pool of Samaria; and king Ahab was buried in the city of Samaria.

Jehoshaphat returned to Judah.

Ahaziah, King of Israel.

It was a singular and unhappy thing that both Israel and Judah were ruled by women, both possessed of lawless passions and haughty spirit; and withal idolatrous worshippers of Baal and Astaroth.

- Jezebel ruled her son Ahaziah in Samaria; and her daughter, the wicked Athaliah, governed Jerusalem. O woe to the land left to the guidance of two fierce, cruel, and reckless women.

During Ahaziah's reign, every idol and grove was restored, and the worship of false gods was still more universal than when Ahab lived; for then Elijah had been there to warn the people, and frighten the weak king.

The land of Moab was lost to Israel while Ahaziah reigned, for the people revolted, and the Israelites were not sufficiently recovered from

the war with Syria to attack Moab. Soon afterwards Ahaziah fell through the lattice of an upper room, and injured himself severely. He became alarmed, and sought to know if he should recover or not. Messengers were sent to Ekron, to the idol Baal-zebub, to know whether the king of Israel would recover.

The God of mercy, who had watched over Ahab, now sent Elijah the prophet to arouse the conscience of his son. Elijah met the messengers and said,—“Is there no God in Israel that you go to Ekron? Go, tell your master the words of the Lord:—Thou shalt not come down from the bed on which thou art, but shalt surely die!” The messengers feared the prophet, returned to Ahaziah, and delivered the message; but did not know who the prophet was. Ahaziah inquired, “What manner of man was he who met you and told you these words?” They answered him,—“He was clad in a goat’s hair garment, and girt with a leather girdle.”

“It is Elijah, the Tishbite!” exclaimed the king, angrily. Bent upon his destruction, he sent a captain and fifty men to slay him. The soldiers found him seated on a rock upon the

side of Mount Carmel. "O man of God!" they cried, contemptuously, "come down, for the king hath sent for thee." "If I be a man of God," said Elijah, "let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty men."

And lo, the fire descended at the word, and the men were burned and the prophet saved!

The king sent another band of men who also mocked the prophet, and met with the same fate. Ahaziah, blinded by fury at the loss of his men, sent a third detachment, thinking the ammunition of Elijah must be consumed; (for he knew not its heavenly source.) But these messengers were alarmed at the fate of the others, and they resolved to supplicate for mercy. "O man of God!" the third captain cried, falling upon his knees, "I pray thee let my life, and the life of these thy servants, be precious in thy sight!"

Their prayer was heard—the prophet descended, and fearlessly went with them to the king. He was taken to the bed-side of Ahaziah, who, now a little daunted by the preceding events, asked him to cure him of the fever that had attacked him.

"The word of the Lord has been spoken," replied Elijah. "Because thou sent messengers to inquire of the idol Baal-zebub, and not to the God of Israel, thou shalt never come down from that couch, but shalt die there!"

The words of the prophet were fulfilled. Ahaziah died after a short reign of two years.

Jehoram, King of Israel.

AHAZIAH died young, and left no children; therefore the throne descended to his brother Jehoram. This king was apparently possessed of a stronger mind than his brother or father. He had seen and acknowledged the power of Elijah, and scorned his mother's useless idols. She had not the same hold over him that she had over her husband, and in defiance of her anger he destroyed the idols that she worshipped. He was not, however, sufficiently free from error as to believe in the God of his land,

but continued the garbled cherubim worship which Jeroboam had instituted—the apostate church of Israel.

The course of the prophet Elijah was now finished—his race was run, and the crown was ready for his reward. He knew he was to be taken up to heaven as Enoch had been, and fearing to try the faith of Elisha, or for some other reason, wished to depart alone: but Elisha clung to him. They arrived at Gilgal, and Elijah said,—“Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Beth-el.” But Elisha, determined to be with his beloved friend and master, replied,—“As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.” They went to Beth-el to the college of the sons of the prophets,—then to Jericho, where the prophets there beheld the great miracle of the division of the waters of the Jordan. Elijah smote the river with his mantle, and the waves receded, leaving a path through which the two prophets passed; and this was the last they saw of Elijah. Upon the Jordan bank, after they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I can do for thee before I be taken away from thee.”

"I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me," was all that Elisha asked; no earthly pomp was coveted, but the portion of poverty and scorn, so that a holy spirit might come with it.

"Thou hast asked a hard thing," replied Elijah. "If thou seest me, when I am taken up, it will be a sign that thy prayer is granted."

As they spoke, behold a chariot of fire and horses as of fire, suddenly rushed past, and Elijah was carried toward heaven. "My father! my father!" cried Elisha, in great agitation, tearing his garment, "the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof wert thou!" The mantle which fell from Elijah, his friend took up; and to try if Elijah's power had fallen upon him, smote the waters of the Jordan, crying, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" The water parted and Elisha walked through, greatly to the amazement of the prophets who had remained on the other bank.

"The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha!" they said; and then bowed themselves before him, acknowledging him as their head. The prophets knew Elijah had departed, and said to

Elisha, "Behold there be with thy servants fifty strong men: let them go, I pray thee, and seek our master, lest peradventure the spirit of the Lord hath taken him up and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley." Elisha knew better and forbade them to send; but as they urgently insisted, he said, "Send, if ye will." They therefore searched the surrounding country but found him not. Elijah was never again seen on earth.

These prophets resided in Jericho, which was in the midst of a beautiful plain, once covered with fruit and flowers; but now, in consequence of some taint, the water killed all it touched or whoever drank of it. "Behold," they said to Elisha, wishing to profit by his power, "the situation of this city is pleasant, as my Lord seeth; but the water is naught, and the ground barren."

"Bring me a new cruse with some salt therein," said Elisha, "and I will cure the water." Elisha went to the source of the streams which watered the plain, and throwing the salt in, said, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these wa-

ters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land!"

The waters were healed, and were the *calirroe* of Pliny; and the beautiful stream which other travellers since have found flowing in the plain near Jericho. From thence he sat out to go to Samaria, where his services were needed to comfort the saints and admonish sinners. While on this journey several children were sent out to mock him, and called out after him with insulting words. To stop such symptoms of derision of his holy calling, and to strike the people with fear of his divinely legated power, he thought some great punishment proper. Accordingly, at his word, several wild bears rushed from the adjoining woods and killed the wicked children.

Elisha found Israel in arms, and joined to Judah, were about attacking Moab, to reduce it to submission. Jehoram, king of Israel, had induced Jehoshaphat to assist him in this war by the plea of mutual interest. The two kings sat out; and, to increase their power, went to Edom, and persuaded that king to join them. Thence, the three kings and their hosts wound their

weary way through the wilderness, and at length were startled by the astounding certainty that all water had failed, and if some were not soon discovered, all must perish. The thoughts of Jehoshaphat turned to his God, and he inquired if there were not some prophet near who might entreat the Lord for them. To the joy of all, it was found that Elisha was with the army.

The three kings alighted from their chariots, and together sought the tent of the prophet. "What have I to do with thee?" said Elisha to the king of Israel. "Get thee to the prophets of thy father and mother." "Nay, reject not my prayer," said Jehoram. "Here thou seest three kings and their armies who must be destroyed by Moab, or perish in this desert, if thou dost not supplicate thy God for us."

"As the Lord of hosts liveth before whom I stand," said the prophet, "were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not even look toward, or hear thee. But send me a minstrel."

A harper came, and the prophecy of Elisha was delivered in strains of music. "Thus saith the Lord," he began, "Make this valley full of
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ditches. Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet this valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. But this is a light thing for the power of the Lord. He will also deliver the Moabites into your hands. And ye shall smite every fenced city, and destroy all that is in the land!" He ceased. The people watched eagerly the fulfilment of his word. A rushing sound was at length heard, and from the hills of Edom, water poured down and filled all the ditches they had dug! The shouts of the armies rent the air, and reached the walls of Moab. The Moabite people looked out afar, and beheld a shining fluid filling the ravines of the valley. "This is blood," they cried. "The kings are surely slain. They have smitten each other. Now Moab to the spoil!"

Tumultuously rushed forth the Moabites, to seize the treasures they thought awaiting them; but instead, they met a powerful army which drove them back, destroying all before it. The king of Moab soon saw he had no hope except in escape; so taking with him seven hundred of his best swordsmen, he hoped to cut his way

through. But his efforts were vain. Shut up in the city, he saw nothing but death for all. The last hope of this deluded man was to seek to propitiate the Gods of Moab, by sacrificing his eldest son and successor. This awful event took place upon the walls of the city; and such horror and compassion possessed the allied kings at the dreadful sight, that they abandoned the siege and left the hapless Moabites and their ruined city.

Elisha did not accompany the army, but went on his way doing good to all that required it.

The first one recorded who applied to him, was a widow, supposed to be the widow of Obadiah, who had supported the prophets in a cave, and thus embarrassed his family. The widow was unable to pay her husband's debts; and her sons were claimed by the creditors as bondmen. In this strait she sought the prophet, and he furnished her with means of gaining money by miraculously filling many vessels with oil. This she sold, paid her debts, and redeemed her sons.

Many other miracles were performed by this inspired man, but we will only dwell upon those

that relate to royal matters. Of these was the leprosy of Naaman.

This man was a nobleman of the court of Syria, much cherished by Ben-hadad. The odious disease respected not rank, and the family of Naaman grieved much for its master.

Among the attendants on the wife of Naaman was a Hebrew girl taken captive in war. One day taking heart, she said to her mistress, "Would God my Lord were with the prophet, that is in Samaria, for he would recover him!" The words of the maid of Israel were reported to her master, who in turn mentioned them to the king of Syria.

"Go to Samaria," said Ben-hadad at once, "and I will write by thee a letter to the king supplicating him to permit thee to be cured of thy evil in Samaria." Naaman with a great train arrived at the city and sent in the letter accompanied by the present for Jehoram of ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of raiment.

Jehoram read the letter, and was angry—he imagined it a snare by which the king of Syria meant to make war upon him. "Am I a God

to kill and make alive!" he cried, tearing his garment, "that this man sends me a man to recover him of leprosy? Behold how he seeketh to quarrel with me!"

Elisha was then in Samaria, and heard of the request of Naaman.

He sent to the king, saying; "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let Naaman come to me and he shall know there is a prophet in Israel!" Accordingly Naaman, in his shining chariot, and numerous train, stood before the humble abode of Elisha. The prophet was not daunted by his grandeur, and did not go out to him, but sent this message. "Go, and wash in Jordan seven times and thy flesh shall come again to thee and thou shalt be clean."

This simple message threw the Syrian into a rage. He expected some mummary to have been done. "Behold, I thought," he said, "he could come out to me, and call on the name of the Lord his God. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of the Jordan?"

He turned to depart but was stopped by his servant, who said, "My father, if the prophet

had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? Why not then do as he says, and wash and be clean?"

Naaman, finding Elisha refused to give any other advice, went to the Jordan and dipped himself seven times, and his disease departed. With great rejoicing Naaman returned to Elisha, who came out to him. "Now I know, there is no God so powerful as the God of Israel!" he cried. "Take then this rich reward for thy services to me." Elisha declined his presents. Naaman urged it upon him, but Elisha said, "As the Lord liveth before whom I stand, I will receive none."

Naaman, determined to worship as the Israelites in future, for he was a convert to their faith now, asked of Elisha, some earth from before his hut, which he considered as holy ground, that he might erect an altar; "for there thy servant," he said, "will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other Gods but unto the God of Israel." He also asked Elisha if he should be wrong, to go to the idol-temple with his master the king, as was his custom, if he did not worship in his heart. Elisha knowing

him to be a true convert allowed this for peace' sake. So that the little Hebrew maiden had been a missionary to point her master to the waters of life, and made him a believer in the truth.

Naaman departed, but had not gone far when he was told that Gehazi was running after them; for the servant did not partake of his master's high gifts of the spirit, and cared not to see Naaman take his rich presents back again. Naaman descended from his chariot and went to meet the prophet's servant. "Is all well?" he asked. "All is well," replied the deceitful Gehazi, "but my master having received two sons of the prophets, sends to ask of thee a talent of silver and two changes of garment for them."

Well pleased was Naaman to serve the prophet, and he bade two servants take to Elisha, two talents of silver and two changes of raiment. The deluded man fancied his master would not know this, and, after dismissing the men, and hiding his treasures, he sought Elisha. "Whence camest thou, Gehazi?" he asked. "Thy servant went no where," he answered.

"Didst thou think my spirit went not with

thee," said his master severely, "when the man turned from his chariot and came to meet thee? For thy sin, may the leprosy of Naaman cleave to thee!" He went from his deceived master's presence a leper as white as snow.

Such restless spirits as the kings of Israel and of Syria could not long remain at peace with each other, and we find they were soon at war again. Some very remarkable scenes occurred during the war, in which the prophet Elisha was allowed to perform several astonishing miracles, for the purpose of awakening these benighted people to the power of the living God.

Jehoram the king set out to meet Ben-hadad, intending to pitch his camp in a certain place, but was warned in time by Elisha that the Syrians were in ambush near that spot. Twice was Jehoram thus saved by Elisha.

Ben-hadad was very wroth at thus losing his prey, and suspected some of his people had betrayed him. He turned to his officers assembled around him and asked angrily, "Which of you is in league with the king of Israel and reveals all my plots to him?" "None, my Lord," said one supposed to be Naaman, "but Elisha, their

prophet, knows and can tell Jehoram, the words thou speakest in thy bed chamber. Naaman, although he had thought it his duty to reveal the probable source of these mysterious warnings given to Jehoram, yet knew so well his power that he feared not for him. Ben-hadad inquired, and learnt that Elisha was now in Dothan, and thither he sent a strong band of horsemen and chariots.

The servant of Elisha, when he arose in the morning, beheld the Syrians surrounding the town, and feared for his master. He ran to his chamber crying out, "Alas my master! what shall we do; the Syrians are upon us!" "Fear not," replied the prophet, "for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them."

The prophet then kneeled in prayer, and the servant was astonished to behold the air filled with horses and chariots of fire, apparently sent to protect Elisha. Through the means delegated to the prophet, the Syrians were struck with blindness, and groping about, followed Elisha into the city of Samaria. Great was their dismay, when their eyes were allowed

to open, and they beheld themselves in the presence of the king of Israel in Samaria!

Jehoram was well pleased with Elisha. "My father, shall I smite them?" he asked. "Thou shalt not smite them," said Elisha. "Wouldst thou slay thy captives? rather give them provision and let them go to their master."

The Syrians were feasted and sent away to relate the wondrous tale of Elisha's power, which affected all who heard it, except the king alone. Like all who refuse the truth, he plunged still deeper into error; and now marched up and besieged Samaria, hoping to destroy both king and prophet. Shut up in their city, the Samaritans suffered from famine. The people were reduced to the greatest extremity, and prayed Elisha to perform some miracle for their help. But the time had not yet come for him to act, as the Lord deemed the Samaritans not sufficiently humbled.

One day, when Jehoram was passing along to his daily station on the summit of the wall, where he went to watch the enemy, a woman threw herself before him and cried, "Help, my

lord, O king!" He thought she sought for food, and replied, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I find thee food? out of the barn-floor, or out of the empty wine-press?"

"Nay, my lord, I ask only justice of a woman. Pressed by hunger, we each agreed to eat our sons. I boiled my son and we eat him, and now she refuseth to give up hers." These dreadful words filled the king with horror, and as he tore his robe in a passion of despair, the people around saw he wore sack-cloth next his skin, in token of mourning. Anger at Elisha for not terminating these evils possessed him, and he sent some men to bring him before him.

The prophet was sitting with the elders of the city around him, who came to him for counsel. By the spirit, he knew that the king had sent men to seize and kill him; and said to the elders, "See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away my head. When the messenger comes do not his bidding, for his repentant master will soon follow him. Accordingly it happened thus. Jehoram was well pleased to find Elisha alive; but said sullenly, "This evil

is from the Lord, and I will not await his will longer, but make a sally from the city."

"Hear ye the word of the Lord!" said Elisha, solemnly; "to-morrow about this time shall provisions be so plenty, that a measure of fine-flour will be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." One of the lords of the court, upon whose arm the king leaned, laughed derisively, and said, "This might be if the Lord made windows in heaven and rained it down." To which the prophet replied, "Behold thou shalt see it with thy eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."

That night four lepers sat in a famishing state at the gate of the city. One, at last, arose and said, "Why sit we here to die? Let us enter the Syrian camp, and if they kill us, it is only the fate which must be ours here, and if they refrain, we shall have saved our lives." This counsel was followed, and they ran rapidly down the stony hill. The miracles of the prophet Elisha, although unheeded by the king, had made a powerful effect upon the spirits of the people, and every day they expected some terrible destruction to come upon them suddenly

sent by the prophet. Thus, as they sat around their watch-fires, they listened to every noise from the city, or looked in the air to see if legions of horsemen were not coming upon them. A noise was at last heard—a rushing of men or horses towards them—they arose and ran screaming about the camp that the Israelites were upon them. A panic took place and the army fled. The lepers were, at first, astounded by the noise, but silence succeeding, they crept softly up to the camp; they entered and saw the tents filled with gold, and silver, and armor, and meat, and drink, but no man was there. Astonished, they grew bolder, and after eating and drinking, they hid away a goodly share of treasure, and then turned homewards. The warders were pacing the walls when voices were heard calling upon them, and soon the news brought by the lepers had been heard by them, and sent at once to the king. Jehoram arose; but believed not the Syrians had fled. “They have only gone a little way from their camp,” he said, “to lure us from our strong hold, and when we are out, they will fall upon us.” One of the servants answered, “Let some one take, I pray thee, one of

the few horses that famine has spared to us, and go out and see if this news be true." The advice was followed, and two horsemen rode out and pursued the retreating Syrians, whose course was traced to the Jordan, by the garments and vessels which they had cast away in their haste.

The next day the words of the prophet were fulfilled, and fine flour and barley were sold for a trifle in the gates of Samaria. Moreover, the scoffing lord beheld the plenty, but could not partake, for he had charge of the gate, and the people rushing tumultuously out to the Syrian tents, trod upon him in the gate, and he died as Elisha had foretold.

It will be remembered, that when Elijah fled to the wilderness from the wrath of Ahab and Jezebel, he was told by the Lord to anoint Hazael king of Syria, in place of Ben-hadad, and Jehu son of Nimshi, king of Israel. This duty had been delegated to Elisha, who now stood upon a hill-side in Syria, gazing sadly upon the beautiful city of Damascus, which lay in the centre of a verdant plain, across which flowed the streams Abana and Parphar. The good man sighed when he remembered his mission; for

the fierce Hazael was to be anointed king that he might fulfill the punishment of Israel, which the weak Ben-hadad was unable to do. As he gazed, a train of camels and men crossed the plain and approached him, and when they had reached the hut where was his abode, a man, richly clothed, alighted and came to him. It was Hazael, one of the principal Lords of Ben-hadad, who said, "Thy son Ben-hadad, king of Syria, hath sent me to thee, O holy prophet, to inquire if he shall die of this disease or no." "Go, say unto thy master," said the prophet, "thou shalt certainly recover of this illness; and yet I foresee he will soon die, but by a more cruel death." He then fixed his eyes steadily upon Hazael, the future destroyer, and the man of God wept. "Why weepest thou, my Lord?" asked Hazael. "Alas! Hazael, it is because I foresee all the evil which thou wilt do to the children of Israel. Thou wilt burn their strongholds, and slay men, women, and children with untiring cruelty."

"What! is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" asked Hazael, aghast.

"Yea, Hazael. The Lord hath showed me

that thou shalt soon be king of Syria." As Hazael rode back over the plain he mused upon the prophet's words: He should be king of Syria! How his ambitious heart swelled at the thought! And conqueror of Israel! but a merciful conqueror, and Elisha should find he was not so wicked as he imagined.

We know not what spirit we are of until we are tried; and truly said Solomon, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

Ben-hadad revived from his illness, but Hazael, eager to ascend the throne, resolved to murder him. As he always had access to his room, he sought an opportunity when no human eye saw him, and dipping a cloth in water pressed it upon the face of his king and master until he died. He had the command of the army, and soon caused himself to be declared king of Syria.

After being well settled upon his throne, Hazael set out with a great army to attack Jehoram. In a battle the king of Israel was wounded, and returned to the city of Jezreel to be cured. Here he was visited by his relative, the king of Judah.

The time had come for the destruction of the house of Ahab; which had been foretold to that king as a punishment for his sins. Jehu, one of his captains, a fierce, bold, and unsparing man, was the chosen agent of God; and Elisha hastened to send down to the camp one of the sons of the prophets for the purpose of anointing him. Jehu, the commander of the army, was feasting in the guard room with some of his captains when the prophet entered. "I have an errand to thee, O captain!" he said. "Unto which of us?" asked Jehu. "Even unto thee, Jehu, son of Nimshi." Jehu arose and followed the prophet into an inner room; where he opened a horn of perfumed oil, and poured it upon the head of Jehu, saying,—“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Thou shalt be my avenger, to smite the house of Ahab. And thou shalt avenge me of Jezebel, who hath shed the blood of my servants the prophets. The dogs shall eat her in the portion of Jezreel!”

His mission over, the prophet opened the door and disappeared, and Jehu returned thoughtfully to the feast.

"Is all well?" asked one of the captains. "What said this mad fellow to thee?" "Surely ye know him, and his communication. Ye have sent him." "It is false. Tell us what he said." "He hath anointed me king over Israel, in place of Jehoram my master!"

Jehu was a favorite with the soldiers, and the son of Jezebel was hated; so that they joyfully received the news. Their garments were spread upon the stairs that ran outside, and on this as a throne they placed Jehu, and with trumpets sounding proclaimed him king of Israel.

The warder upon the watch-tower of Jezreel reported to Jehoram the approach of a large body of horse and chariots. The king knew not what it could be, and said,—“Let a horseman go out to meet them, and ask the leader if he come in peace.” The horseman approached Jehu, who was standing in his chariot, and said, “Thus asks the king, Is it peace?”

“What hast thou to do with peace?” said Jehu, “get thee behind me.” The warder on the tower sent word below that the messenger had joined the approaching party of men. An-

other messenger was sent with the same demand, and he also turned behind the soldiers.

The city became alarmed, and gathered upon the walls to watch the troop. Jehoram sent again to the warder. "I know not who they be," he said. "But their driving is like that of Jehu the captain, for he ever driveth furiously." "It is Jehu with news from the army," said the king. "Make ready my chariot, and I will ride forth to meet them."

Jehoram and Ahaziah, king of Judah, rode out each in his chariot, and came up to Jehu where he awaited them on the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite. "Is it in peace thou comest, Jehu?" asked the king. "What peace is there for any," said Jehu, "when the wickedness of thee and thy mother Jezebel is so great" "Treachery! Treason! O Ahaziah!" cried out Jehoram, and turned to flee; but an arrow from Jehu, the Avenger, brought him low, and he sank down dead in his chariot.

"Throw him upon the field of Naboth!" cried Jehu to his captain Bidkar. "Now have the words of the Lord come to pass which thou and I heard as we rode behind Ahab: 'I have

seen the blood of Naboth,' said the prophet, 'and I will revenge me here in this very field,' saith the Lord."

Jezebel inhabited the ivory palace built for her by her husband Ahab. She heard of the death of her son, and the approach of the conqueror. To avert her fate, and ingratiate herself with Jehu, she painted her face, and decked her head and person with golden nets, and chains, and silk of Damascus. But vain were all these mufflers and jewels—her career of wickedness was run. Jehu approached; Jezebel looked out, and, in hopes to stir his conscience, cried,—“Had Zimri peace who slew his master?” Jehu looked up at the windows which were crowded with attendants and courtiers. “Who is on my side? Who!” cried he. Many eager voices proclaimed their allegiance to him.

“Throw out, then, that wicked woman! Let the dogs eat her, according to the words of the prophet!” In spite of her struggles they threw her down, Jehu rode over her, and then left her to the dogs.

When Jehu afterwards said, “Go and bury this woman, for she was a king’s daughter, al-

though accursed ;" they found only a few of her bones left by the dogs.

However long deferred, the doom pronounced by the Lord was fulfilled.



Jehu, King of Israel.

THERE were few men more fitted than Jehu to become the exterminator of the house of Ahab. He was proud of his commission, and being a man of blood by profession, sternly set himself to his terrible task. His first step was to write to the noblemen in whose care were the seventy sons and grandsons of Ahab. To try them, and discover their designs, he told them to look out the best and meetest of them, and place him upon the throne. They saw the snare, and knowing they could offer no resistance to the conqueror of Jehoram, sent to Jehu their complete submission, in these words: "We are thy

servants and will do all thou shalt bid us; we will not make a king; do thou that which is right in thy eyes."

To this Jehu answered: "If ye be mine, and if ye will hearken unto me, take ye the heads of your masters' sons and come to me in Jezreel, to-morrow. The cruel mandate was obeyed; and by Jehu's orders, the heads were laid in two heaps, one on each side of the gate of the palace. In the morning he went out of his palace and stood between the two heaps, of which he pretended no knowledge. The people assembled around, to whom Jehu said, "I acknowledge I conspired against and slew my master, but who slew these? It was done by the nobles of Ahab. Now know that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the Lord, which the Lord spake concerning the house of Ahab; for the Lord will do that which he spoke by his servant Elijah."

This address, and the bloody sight, aroused the people, and the commands of Jehu to slay the nobles, counsellors, and friends of Ahab were swiftly obeyed. So abhorred was the idolatrous Ahab and his family, that all rejoiced to see

them destroyed. Jehonadab the son of Rechab, a great and good man, came out when Jehu passed to greet him. Many might have shuddered at seeing the bloody king Jehu, but Jehonadab knew the land would be well rid of that wretched race, and resolved to countenance Jehu. "Is thy heart with my heart?" asked the king. "It is," was the reply of Jehonadab. "Then give me thy hand." This request was granted, and their hands were grasped in token of amity. "Now ride with me and see my zeal for the Lord," said Jehu, making room in his chariot for Jehonadab, who rode beside the king. In Samaria, more relatives of the house of Ahab were slain, being the last of that wicked race.

Jehu, never tired of slaying, next resolved to exterminate the priests of Baal and Astaroth; with which the land swarmed, under the auspices of Ahab and Jezabel.

"Proclaim a solemn assembly," he said, to hide his intentions. "Ahab served Baal much, but I will serve him more. Call hither all the priests and prophets of Baal, and let his worshippers come, for I have a great sacrifice to make."

The temple of Baal was crowded with worshippers, the priests by hundreds thronged in, clad in their vestments of ceremony; and the great sacrifices commenced. Jehu had stationed a body of soldiers around the temple. He then entered with Jehonadab, and cried with a loud voice, "Is there here any worshipper of the Hebrew's God? If so let him depart, for we would see here only the people of Baal." There were none to answer; and then Jehu gave his commands to the captain: "Go in and slay them; let none come forth!"

Dreadful must have been the massacre! After all were destroyed, the temple and idols were also demolished.

For these services, Jehu received the divine promise that the kingdom should remain in his family for four generations. He reigned twenty-eight years; many of which were spent in repelling the incursions of Hazael, king of Syria, who did Israel much harm. But to so fierce a man as Jehu, an active, war-like life must have been more to his mind than a peaceful one.

Jehu died, and was buried in Samaria.

Jehoram, King of Judah.

JEHORAM, the son of Jehoshaphat, was very unlike his great father. He had not his strength of mind, and thus easily fell under the influence of his wife, Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem sighed to see their temple shut up, and only visited by a few faithful priests; while altars were every where erected to Baal and other idols. All this arose from the great error of Jehoshaphat, in allying his son with the house of Ahab.

Those who expressed any disapprobation of Jehoram's conduct, were slain. His brothers were first murdered, and he took possession of the rich inheritance which their father had left them. Many of the princes and great men of Judah were also slain; and to sum up his

sins, he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel.

To stop him in his career of evil, Elijah wrote him the following epistle :

“Thus saith the Lord God of David thy ancestor : Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but hast walked in the ways of Ahab, and forced thy people to worship idols, and hast slain thy brethren which were better than thyself,—behold the Lord will smite thy people, thy wives, thy children, and all thy goods ; and thou shalt die of a grievous disease of thy bowels.”

This letter from the prophet was unheeded. Then the surrounding nations were stirred up against him. Jehoram went out to fight the Edomites, and completely routed them ; but other nations still attacked him. At last he was conquered by the combined forces of the Philistines and Arabians, and driven into Jerusalem ; and his palace in the neighborhood, with his treasures, wives, and children, were all destroyed,

save his wife Athaliah, and son Ahaziah, or Jehoahaz, who were probably in Jerusalem.

The remainder of his punishment then came upon him. He passed two years in dreadful torture in his bowels, and then died unlamented. He was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the sepulchre of kings. Neither was there burning of spices nor any other royal ceremonial at his tomb. Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he began to reign, and sat on the throne eight years.



Ahaziah King of Judah

THIS only remaining son of Jehoram was twenty-two years old when he ascended the throne. His reign was only one year.

In all things, he followed his father's footsteps and clung to the errors of the house of Ahab to which he belonged. Through his attachment to this race he met his death. Jehoram king of Israel had returned to Jezreel severely wounded

in a battle with the Syrians ; and Ahaziah went to pay him a visit of sympathy ; probably sent by his mother Athaliah, sister of Jehoram.

When the king of Israel rode forth to meet Jehu, who came in arms against him as has been related above, Ahaziah accompanied him riding in a chariot by his side. Jehoram was slain, and Ahaziah fled. He was pursued and killed at Megiddo. Jehu ordered his people to carry him home to be buried, "because of the sake of the good king Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with his whole heart."

He was carried to his mother, and buried in the sepulchre of the kings of Judah.



Athaliah, Queen of Judah.

EAGER for sovereign power and devoid of natural feeling, Athaliah, when she heard of the death of her son Ahaziah, seized upon the throne. The heirs of the late king stood in her way, and these, although her own grand-children, she

doomed to death. All perished except one son Joash, who was saved by Jehosheba his aunt, sister of Jehoram, and wife of the high priest Jehoiada.

Jehosheba resided with her husband in the temple and thus preserved her life. Here, in the solitude of the courts of the Lord, now abandoned for Baal, Jehosheba and the high priest concealed the young prince for six years.

Athaliah during this time reigned in Jerusalem, and filled the land with sin and confusion. The people sighed for freedom, but her power was too strong yet to break. At length the measure of her iniquity was filled, and her career was at its close.

Jehoiada the high priest, seeing the time ripe for the fulfilment of his measures, now resolved to place the rightful heir upon the throne.

He let some of the faithful Levites into the secret, and sent them abroad, to the nobles who had fled from the tyranny of Athaliah; also to soldiers, officers, and faithful people; and demanded their presence in the temple, on such a day as a great ceremony was to take place. The day arrived. Jehoiada divided the soldiers into

three bands, one to guard the principal gate, one the upper one, and the third to stand before the young king's apartments and surround him when he came forth.

The courts were filled with people; and the soldiers, armed by the high priest from the armory of the temple, stood at their posts. The king's guards came forth and stood around the upper court, each with a sword drawn, in his hand; then Jehoiada the high priest came forward, leading a youth of seven years, clothed in royal garments. Great was the joy of all, and astonishment of those who were not in the secret, when they heard Jehoiada say:—

“Behold, your rightful sovereign, the son of Ahaziah, who for six years has been concealed in the temple! His aunt, whom you here see, saved him from the cruelty of Athaliah.” He then led Joash to the king's seat by the marble column, and, after anointing him, crowned him king of Judah. Then the air was rent by shouts of, God save the king! Down with Athaliah! and the silver trumpets sounded, mixed with the strains of sweet singers and musical instruments.

The Queen Athaliah had been told of the

crowds rushing to the temple, and, like all tyrants, being suspicious, she hastened over the private way from the palace to the temple, and there beheld a crowned king and kneeling subjects! She stamped with rage, tore her clothes, and cried out, "Treason! treason!"

"Slay the wicked woman!" cried Jehoiada, "but let her not die here in the Lord's house." They dragged her out and killed her. The people then ran and destroyed all the temples and idols and priests of Baal; and rejoicing everywhere prevailed that the wicked queen was slain.

JOSH, King of Judah.

JEHOIADA the priest made a covenant between the Lord, and the king with his people, that they should be the Lord's people. Then, after these ceremonies, he took the young king, and, with a numerous train of nobles and captains and people, entered his father's palace, and placed him upon his throne.

Many years did the heart of God's people rejoice to behold the peace that reigned in Judah, and to see the worship of the temple renewed. Joash took great interest in the house of God where he had spent so many happy years under the teaching of the good Jehoiada. He seemed impatient that the repairs went on so slowly. There was not much treasure to devote to this purpose, and there was much to be done; for in the days of Athaliah, it had been left to go to decay. The king commanded a chest to be made with a hole in the top, and placed it near the entrance into the temple; and published to all, the wants of the holy house, and requested every one to bring an offering towards its repair.

By this means a considerable sum was gathered, and masons, carpenters, and workmen of all sorts were employed there daily. While Jehoiada lived all went well; but alas, this good old man waxed old; he died at the age of one hundred and thirty years.

Not long after his death a change came. There were many princes of Judah, living at a distance from Jerusalem, who had been brought up in sin and idolatry, and who had been only

pretenders to reformation while Jehoiada lived. No longer awed by this just old man, they came to court, and boldly proclaimed their old sentiments. They told the young king it was a grievous thing for them to come up so far to worship, and begged they might not come so often to the religious ceremonies at Jerusalem. Joash, not having the fear of God so deeply implanted in his heart as he ought to have, and willing to do the nobles a service, told them they might omit some holy days. News came soon after to Jerusalem, that these bad men had taken advantage of this leniency, and had actually set up altars in high places, among the groves planted by Athaliah.

Zechariah, son of the old Jehoiada, had been made high priest in his place. He sent messengers to the rebellious princes, to reprove them for their wicked doings. It was in vain, for they were only derided, and returned to Jerusalem without having effected any good. Zechariah then rebuked them, saying:—"Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord? Ye cannot prosper. Because ye have forsaken the Lord, he will forsake you." The princes were

angry with Zechariah, and bade him confine his lectures to the people of Jerusalem. They even came to the king and complained; they having only, they said, acted by the consent of the king. Joash was misled by these wicked men; he was, perhaps, weary of always being guided by another. He had long submitted to the government of Jehoiada, but Zechariah he would not brook. Forgetting the services of his good old friend and protector, Jehoiada, he would not support the cause of his son. High quarrels took place between the worshippers in the temple, and the adherents of the idolatrous princes, which ended at last in the death of the prophet Zechariah, who was slain in the house of the Lord!

The horror of Joash and of his people was great; but the king's eyes were open too late. His punishment soon came. Hazael and his Syrians were poured down upon him; and it cost him all the treasure of the city and temple before he was rid of this dangerous man. He was, after that, stricken with many disorders, and in illness and grief passed his days.

His reign continued forty years,—long and

full of evil: and at last he was cut off by conspirators, who slew him while ill in bed.

Joash was not deemed fit to lie in the sepulchre of the kings of Judah; but was buried in a tomb in the city of Jerusalem. A sad end to so excellent a beginning. With a high priest for his counsellor, a people willing to serve him and his God, what a glorious reign might have been his! But he swerved from his faith, and fell!

Jehoahaz, King of Israel.

THE reign of this son of Jehu was seventeen years—chiefly passed in wars with Hazael, king of Syria. So reduced was his once powerful army, that it now contained only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot-soldiers. The land was humbled, and the idols abandoned. They, however, could not attain the pure religion of the people of Judah, but con-

tinued the cherubims' service instituted by Jero-boam the apostate.

Jehoahaz prayed to the Lord, intreating help for the people, and his prayer was heard; and Hazael returned to Damascus, with great treasure, and much of the Israelites' land, and many cities added to the Syrian country. Jehoahaz was buried in Samaria, with its former kings.



Jehoash, King of Israel.

DURING this reign died Elisha the prophet. In his illness Jehoash went down to visit him. He respected the character of Elisha, and remembered all he had done to serve his country. He had also anointed his grandfather Jehu, and to him he was indebted for the crown. When he saw this benefactor of his race passing away, King Jehoash wept and said: "O my father! my father! Better art thou than chariots and horsemen to Israel!"

Elisha comforted him and said: "Take a

bow and arrows." The king took them. "Open the window eastward." It was opened. "Now shoot the arrows of the Lord's deliverance from the Syrians. Thou shalt destroy them in Aphek." Again was the king commanded to take the arrows, and to smite the ground with them. Believing that Elisha was truly a prophet, and all would come to pass that he foretold, king Jehoash complied, and smote the ground three times.

"Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times," said Elisha, "and then hadst thou smitten Syria until thou hadst consumed it; whereas, now shalt thou smite Syria but thrice."

Elisha the prophet died. Sixty years had he taught and reproved, and revealed the Lord's will in Israel. He was buried in Elijah's cave, in Mount Carmel.

Jehoash soon found work for his soldiers; for the Moabites and Syrians fell upon his borders. He repelled the former; fought with and conquered the king of Judah; and, as Elisha had foretold, was victorious over the Syrians in three great battles. This nation, by its great losses, was thoroughly humbled; and restored to the

king of Israel many cities that had been taken in preceding reigns.

Jehoash died after a reign of sixteen years, and was buried with the kings in Samaria.



Jeroboam, the second King of Israel.

JEROBOAM was the son of Jehoash. He reigned forty years, many of which were harassed by incursions of the old enemy of Israel, the Syrians. Hazael was dead, and his successor, another Ben-hadad, was anxious to retrieve the losses of his people, and fell upon the borders of Israel with fire and sword. Jeroboam was not an idolator, but followed the religion of his predecessor of the same name. He severely felt the loss of Elisha, as a director and powerful help to his people.

Then the Lord saw that the affliction of Israel was bitter, and not wishing to blot them out yet, sent the prophet Jonah to comfort and ad-

vise them. Amos was also raised up to testify against Syria. "Thus saith the Lord!" he said, "for three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron." "I will send a fire that shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad."

Accordingly Israel prevailed against the Syrians, and recovered its whole eastern border from Hamath to the sea of Galilee.

With peace, however, came the usual corruption and idolatry of the Israelite people, and Amos was again called to warn them of the punishment which was to be theirs if they reformed not.

"O children of Israel," said their Lord, through his prophet, "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, in your gardens and your orchards, and ye have not returned to me! I have withholden the rain from you, and ye have not returned to me! Your young men I have slain with the sword, and taken away your horses, and yet ye have not returned unto me! But seek not Bethel, nor the calves of Gilgal; seek the Lord; he it is that formeth the moun-

tains, and createth the winds, and declareth unto man his thoughts. Seek him that made the seven stars of Orion, and calleth for the waters of the sea and poureth them out upon the surface of the earth!"

Thus Amos continued to testify against the people, but was unheeded. He then lifted his voice against the king and priests: "The high places of Isaac and sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword!"

This aroused the anger of Amaziah, the priest of the golden calves of Bethel, and, hoping to put him to silence, he went to the king and said, "Amos hath conspired against thee. He saith Jeroboam shall perish, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land." Jeroboam, however, respected Amos, and took no heed of the accusations of Amaziah. The priest, who saw Amos affected the people, and that his worship was neglected, said to him, "O Amos, flee thee away into the land of Judah, but prophecy no more in Bethel, for it is the king's chapel." "What I say is from the Lord," replied Amos. "I was no prophet, neither was I

a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and gatherer of dates, and the Lord said to me: Go prophecy unto my people Israel. Now, therefore, hear his word against thee, O Amaziah! thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thou shalt die in a polluted land, for Israel shall go into captivity."

Amos was unharmed, and continued to prophecy during the life of Jeroboam.

The king was buried in Samaria.



Zachariah, King of Israel.

THE days of Israel were numbered. All that was foretold by the prophets was about to come to pass.

Zachariah was the fourth son of Jehu, and the last that was to reign of that race, as it had been told him by Elisha. He was an idolater; and made himself so disagreeable to his people, that

a conspiracy was made against him, and he was murdered by one of his courtiers, by the name of Shallum, son of Jabesh. He reigned but six months.

Shallum, King of Israel.

MENAHAM was a general over the troops of Zachariah. And as soon as he heard of the death of his master, turned towards Samaria, and defeated and killed Shallum, after a short reign of thirty days.

Menahem, King of Israel.

WHEN Shallum died, Menahem, thinking he had as good right to the throne as any one, seized upon the sovereign power. The people

of the cities of Israel did not sit easy under this usurpation, and shut their gates against him. Menahem was a man prompt in action, and, leaving his palace, he headed his troops himself and attacked the rebel cities. They were subdued, and the people, old and young, were massacred with much cruelty.

Pul, the king of Assyria, now thought the situation of Israel was so low that he might, with hope of success, march towards it. He was met by the agents of Menahem, who offered one thousand talents of silver, if he would refrain from war with him. Pul consented to accept the treasure, and return; intending only to put off awhile his descent upon Israel. To gather the great sum promised, the king of Israel taxed the men of wealth fifty shekels each. Ten years the Israelites bore the yoke of this king, when he died, leaving the throne to his son.

Pekahiah, King of Israel.

THIS son of Menahem was, like his father, a follower of the impure religion instituted by Jeroboam the first. He reigned only two years. While at a banquet in his ivory palace, he was set upon by Pekah, one of his captains, and a band of Gileadites, and slain at his own table.



Pekah, King of Israel.

THE throne of Israel was brought low indeed ! Kings passed in quick succession, nearly every one receiving the crown by murder of his predecessor. During the reign of Pekah, the doom that

had been foreshown to Israel began to throw its shadow over the land.

Amos, in a vision, saw the Lord showing him a basket of ripe fruit; and he said, "Amos, what seest thou?" Amos replied, "A basket of summer fruit." Then said the Lord, "The end is come upon my people Israel; I will not pass by them any more! Wailing shall be in their streets, and in all their vineyards wailing. Ye have borne the tabernacle of Moloch: therefore will I cause you to go into *captivity* beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts!"

Assyria was the nation by whose agency the final ruin of unhappy Israel was to be accomplished. During the reign of Pekah, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, came down with a powerful army, and in spite of all resistance overran half the land, conquered many cities, and returned with immense spoil. He carried away with him as captives half the people of Israel.

Pekah reigned twenty years. He was also murdered by Hoshea the son of Elah.

Hoshea, King of Israel.

HOSHEA ascended the throne of the murdered Pekah. He was the last king of Israel. Hoping to avert the doom coming upon his nation, he sent a present to So, king of Egypt, and invited him to come and protect him against Assyria. Shalmeneser, king of Assyria, heard of this, and, like a lion roaring for his prey, he rushed upon Israel. Three years Hoshea resisted his fate, while besieged by the king of Assyria in Samaria.

In the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea the city fell into the hands of the Assyrians. The whole land was then in the power of that nation; and to be sure of victory over Israel, the rest of the nation and its king, Hoshea, were carried away into captivity. Their doom was fulfilled. They hearkened not to the Lord, and were destroyed. What remained were sent to

the cities of Media and Assyria, and never since that time has the fate of the lost ten tribes of Israel been known !

They shall, however, not be lost forever. God hath said : " I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord."

The forsaken cities of Israel were peopled by the inhabitants of Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim.



Kings of Judah Continued.

DID the fate of Israel affect the people of Judah? Did they fear the punishments of an offended God? Did they reform their way and seek to avert those dread prophecies which they had seen fulfilled in their erring brethren? Did

they walk in a straight path with trembling hearts?

Alas! they took no heed! When did they ever remember? When they were taken from slavery in Egypt, and carried through many dangers with a powerful hand; and when led by a living present Deity; they made themselves idols and worshipped them before His face! When, after terrible punishments and tender mercies, they beheld themselves seated in the promised land, where, they were told by Moses, if they obeyed not the Lord, they should be smitten and carried away captive into a nation they and their fathers had not known;—there, in the midst of all their God-given enjoyments, their wise and favored king, even Solomon, bowed down to other gods! Did his fall and punishment affect another king? Alas, no! for in a few years after, we see Jeroboam set up an apostate church, and the worship of images! What amazement seizes us when we read these things; and when we remember that prophets were continually raised up to warn and teach them!

And now how do such lessons of the past

affect us? "Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" We have also teachers—do we fear the judgments of the Lord and praise his mercies? Do we as we read these scenes take them to heart? Alas! how the angels look down astonished when they see some of us even refuse to read the pages of these histories, and turn from them as "old-world fables of nations long past away!"

Amaziah, King of Judah.

THIS king was son of Joash and Jehoadan; and was twenty-five years old when called to the throne. He possessed some fine qualities, and was so just that when his father's murderers were punished, he forgave their children, who always had perished with their parents.

He was of a warlike disposition, and soon set on foot an expedition against Edom. All of his male subjects above twenty were bidden to come

to Jerusalem, and soon an army of three hundred thousand men were encamped before the city. Not content with this, the king sent one hundred talents of silver to Samaria, and hired one hundred thousand Israelites to join him. Against this last step a prophet who lived at court objected. He said, "O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee! The fear of the Lord is not with Israel." "Wouldst thou then lose the hundred talents with which I have hired them?" asked the king. "Oh, go if thou wilt," said the prophet; "but God shall make thee fall before the enemy; and he can give thee much more than this money." Amaziah listened to the prophet, and sent away the soldiers of Israel. Their anger was loud; and they returned home uttering complaints, and fell upon and destroyed several cities of Judah.

Amaziah departed. His inroad was unforeseen, and he destroyed all before him to Petra, the city in the Rocks, which he conquered. The king of Judah then returned triumphant, bringing home great treasure and many captives.

It can scarcely be credited, that this king, who had been so obedient to the prophet, had

brought with him the idols of Edom, and moreover, had set them up in Jerusalem to worship them! This did Amaziah, and was burning incense when the prophet stood before him: "Powerful gods are these!" he said, "who could not save their own people from thy hand! What doest thou with them?"

"Art thou one of the king's council?" asked Amaziah angrily. "Forbear, or thou shalt be smitten." "I will forbear," said the prophet, "for I know that God hath determined to destroy thee!"

In the pride of his heart, at his success against Edom, the king of Judah determined to attack Israel, and sent a defiance to Joash the king. Joash sent this contemptuous reply:

"The thistle of Lebanon said to the cedar of Lebanon, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast and trode down the thistle. Lo, thy heart is lifted up because thou hast smitten Edom; but abide at home: meddle not, lest thou shouldst fall, and Judah with thee."

Amaziah, furious with rage, rushed to battle. He met the forces of Israel at Bethshemesh,

was conquered, and taken prisoner by Joash. The king of Israel, with his royal prisoner, went to Jerusalem. He caused a great breach to be made in the walls, and entered in triumph. Satisfied with this, the king of Israel released Amaziah; and after seizing all the treasures of the temple, and of the royal palace, he departed with his spoil, and many hostages, to Samaria.

Did Amaziah throw away his useless idols? He returned to them, like the dog in the Proverbs, with greater zest, and lived many years in wickedness. His conduct displeased many of his people. A conspiracy was formed to slay him, of which he obtained knowledge in time. He fled to Lachish; but here the avenger pursued him, and he was slain. The king of Judah was brought back in a chariot and horses, and buried in Jerusalem.

He reigned twenty-nine years.

Azariah, or Uzziah,

KING OF JUDAH.

UZZIAH, the son of Amaziah and his wife Jecoliah, was only sixteen years old when placed upon the throne. He must have possessed good counsellors, for he grew up to be a man of great qualities, and was a wise and good ruler. He sought the Lord, and listened to the prophets, and while he did this he prospered. The temple worship was restored, and the building beautified. He also rebuilt the broken walls of Jerusalem, and erected towers at the corners, strongly fortified. Uzziah also encouraged agriculture. Husbandmen and vine-dressers, green fields and flocks of cattle, were seen over the land of Judah. Wells were dug in deserts;

towers built for the protection of his borders; and once more peace and plenty comforted the hearts of the sons of Judah.

His army was in excellent discipline, and numbered three hundred and seven thousand five hundred men. Over these were set two thousand six hundred captains. They were all armed with shields, spears, helmets, habergeons, bows, and slings. With this army, the king of Judah set out to attack the old enemies of his people, the Philistines. The cities of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod were destroyed, and the people thoroughly humbled. Cities were built to keep them in submission.

Uzziah also defeated the Arabians, and recovered the port of Elah on the Red Sea. His kingdom was now in the most flourishing condition. The Ammonites, fearing him, brought in great gifts.

The power and wisdom of Uzziah spread abroad as far as Egypt, and he was feared and held in reverence by his people, and the nations around. Isaiah, the great prophet, was then in Jerusalem, and said to the people, "Come ye;

and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob ; for out of Zion shall go forth the law."

Great was the rise of Uzziah, and sudden was his fall.

His successes, and the reverence in which he was held, so elevated his heart, that he forgot from whom he received all these blessings, and with a haughty spirit sought to seize the high priesthood of the temple. But Isaiah had said, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled;" and Uzziah was punished.

A great sacrifice was to be held at the temple. The people were gathered, the Levites stood around ; the high priest Azariah and all the other priests were in their places, waiting the king's arrival. King Uzziah came in royal state ; over his garment of fine white wool were flowing robes of blue and scarlet, richly embroidered ; and his girdle and diadem glittered with jewels.

To the astonishment of all, he took a censer from a table, and entered the temple. Azariah and the other priests rushed after him, and, to their horror, he had penetrated the holy of

holies ; a place where the high priest alone entered, and where neither priest, king, nor Levite durst venture. "Stay thy hand, Uzziah!" cried the high priest: "it appertaineth not to thee to burn incense unto the Lord ; but to the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to the service." But Uzziah's heart was lifted up by his prosperity, and he thought a king could do no wrong.

The priests gathered about him, crying, "Go out of the sanctuary ! Thou hast transgressed, and art dishonored before the Lord !"

Uzziah still haughtily refused, when, lo ! he was struck with leprosy, and his forehead was white with the dreadful stain.

The priests then thrust him out without ceremony, for a leper cannot remain in even a house with others by their law. The unhappy king stayed not for them, but fled from the temple and hid himself in despair.

This attempt of Uzziah to rule the church as well as the state ended in a most disastrous manner. He was incapable of business, and his son Jotham was made a ruler over the people ; and he passed the remainder of his miserable life in a house outside the city walls. Being unclean,

he could mix no more with human kind, nor even enter the house of God. "How are the mighty fallen!" He reigned fifty-two years. At his death he was laid in the burial ground of royal and noble families, but not suffered to be entombed with the former kings of Judah.



Jotham, King of Judah.

AT his father's death, Jotham was crowned king; having only acted as governor before. He was twenty-five years old when he ascended the throne. Few kings of Judah before him had possessed his piety, judgment, and honor. To forbid idolatry entirely among the people was impossible, but the temple worship was carried on in all its ceremonies. Perhaps as a sort of reparation for his father's offence towards the priests, he beautified and adorned the temple; built the eastern gate, and repaired the cloisters and walls. He built many cities, castles, and towers in the lonely places among mountains

and forests, for the protection of his people while travelling, or watching their flocks.

We have no account of wars in his reign, except against the Ammonites. They had refused to pay their tribute during the last years of Uzziah. Jotham marched into their territories, and compelled them to pay silver, wheat, and barley. After a happy reign of sixteen years, he died and was buried in the city of David.

Ahaz, King of Judah.

ALAS for the peace and happiness of Judah, when this wicked man ascended the throne! He was the son of Jotham, but the opposite to his father in everything.

Images were cast at his command, and erected to Baal, on every high place, where the king might be seen burning incense. The people were soon brought over to join him, and the temple was deserted. Not content with this, he even made an altar to Moloch, that dread god,

and caused his own sons to pass through fire before it, in the valley of Hinnom. Horror possessed the few good that remained in Jerusalem, but they were unable to stop the downward progress of this most wicked king.

There was one, however, who could make Ahaz fear. The Lord of Judah, willing to punish him and the idolatrous people, caused Pekah, the king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria, to join together and attack Judah. They hoped to take Jerusalem, and place upon its throne a creature of their own. Ahaz boldly went out to battle, with a large army. He met the allies, was totally defeated, and escaped to Jerusalem with the loss of one hundred and twenty thousand men; his son Maaseiah; Azrikam, governor of his household; and his prime minister Elkanah.

In this strait, Ahaz turned to the God of his fathers. He sent for Isaiah to comfort him and save the city. But the time for the destruction of Jerusalem had not come; and the prophet was told to reassure Ahaz.

“Fear not for the fierce anger of Rezin, nor for the king of Israel,” said Isaiah. “Thus saith

the Lord, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." Still disbelieving, Ahaz was told to ask a sign of the Lord; "either in the depth, or in the height above."

The fearful Ahaz said, "I will not ask; neither will I tempt the Lord." The sign, however, was given in those mysterious and awful words, significant of the virgin-born Immanuel. Of what import, then, could it be to Ahaz, if Judah should be destroyed, when a promised Saviour should arise some future day, to heal their wounds and restore their city?

With a great number of captives, and much spoil, the Israelites retreated towards Samaria. But this unnatural war with Judah was displeasing to the princes and people of Israel. Headed by the prophet Oded, they stood before the gate of Samaria and forbade the soldiers to enter. "Behold," said Oded, "because the Lord is wroth with Judah, and delivered them into your hand, you purpose to keep the children of Judah as bondmen and bondwomen unto you. But are there no sins among you also against the Lord your God? Now, then, deliver your captive brethren, or the fierce

wrath of God will be upon you!" The princes seconded the prophet, and said, "Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: our trespasses are great against the Lord already, and ye come to add to them."

Extraordinary as it may seem, the victorious army, struck by fear of the Lord, set free their captives before the princes and congregation! And still more curious was it, to see the head men clothing and feeding the captives, and then, setting the wounded upon asses, accompanying them to Jericho, where they were left with their countrymen! So bad and so good was this people!

To relieve him from Pekah and Rezin, Ahaz had sent to the king of Assyria, to make war upon Syria, and prevent the king from marching to Jerusalem. To gain this assistance he robbed the temple and city treasury of quantities of silver and gold, and sent it to the Assyrian king.

Tiglath-Pileser accepted the treasure, attacked Damascus, slew Rezin, and carried away the people of the city as captives.

All his enemies were now departed or dead,

and Ahaz recovered his spirits. To avoid the prophet and priests whom he had called around him in his day of fear, he resolved to visit his ally, the king of Assyria, who was in Damascus. With his fear had fled the piety of Ahaz. He publicly worshipped idols with Tiglath-Pileser; and admired so much one of the idol-altars, that he sent to Jerusalem for Urijah, one of his false priests, to take the pattern of it. His past partial resort to the prophet of the Lord filled his bad soul with rage; and when he returned to Jerusalem, as if in revenge for, what he called, his pusillanimous submission, he cut up and destroyed the valuable articles of gold and bronze which stood in the temple, and shut up the temple itself.

In all places of Jerusalem, and other cities of Judah, were idols set up, and incense arose to other gods.

Ahaz placed the Damascus altar in the great court of the temple, and beside it arranged what was left of the temple utensils, according to his pleasure, and not as the Lord had commanded. Even the magnificent sea of brass, made by Solomon, did his unhallowed hands take down

from the backs of the twelve brazen oxen, and placed it before his altar. The beautiful ornaments, the four-faced creature, having the face of the ox, lion, eagle and man, significant of the greatest power in man, beast, cattle and bird, and called cherubim, he also broke up.

Then this great infidel assumed the priesthood, and offered his polluted sacrifices and libations to Baal and the water deities of Syria. Well might Isaiah cry, Woe, upon a land "full of idols, where they worship the work of their own hands!" Well might he exclaim, "Who hath required this of your hands, that you tread my courts? Incense is an abomination unto me, your appointed feasts my soul hateth!" "How is the faithful city become a harlot!" Punishments again came. The Edomites made inroads and carried away many captives. The Philistines fell upon and took many cities, and "the Lord brought Judah low." Again Ahaz sent to Assyria for help. The king wrung more treasure from the unhappy Ahaz, but was of very little service.

Sixteen years the land groaned under the rule of Ahaz. He then died, at the age of thirty-six.

No royal burial was granted him, nor was he laid in the sepulchre of kings; but the burial ground in the city received his worthless, polluted body.



Jezeiah the Good

KING OF JUDAH.

LIKE a star between the clouds is this pious man, standing between such men as Ahaz and Manasseh. He was twenty-five years old when he commenced to reign. His pious disposition, which was soon seen, probably was derived from his mother, Abi, the daughter of Zechariah.

Not content, like the former kings, to establish religion in Jerusalem alone, he created a thorough reformation. Old altars, and fanes, and groves that none of his predecessors could root up, he, with his strong will and horror of idolatry, caused to be entirely destroyed. The temple was thoroughly cleaned and repaired.

He called together the dispersed priests and Levites, and commanded them to assist him. "Sanctify yourselves," he said to the assembled Levites, "sanctify the house of God, and carry forth all the filthiness out of this holy place. Our fathers have trespassed against the Lord; they have shut up the temple door, put out the lamps, and have offered no incense nor sacrifice. Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was great upon Judah, our fathers have fallen by the sword, our sons and our daughters and wives are in captivity. I have, therefore, in my heart resolved to make a covenant with God, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, be not negligent; for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to minister and burn incense unto him." This address of Hezekiah aroused the Levites, and they cleaned out all the devices of Ahaz.

His altars were cast out, and the pictures of his idols painted on the walls were erased. All the vessels belonging to the temple which Ahaz had thrown aside or broken, were repaired, sanctified, and placed upon the tables.

Ahaz had torn the golden plating from the pillars, and this his pious son replaced.

When the temple was restored, Hezekiah opened it with great ceremony, and sacrificed seven rams, seven lambs, seven bullocks, and seven he-goats, for the sin of the king, his family, and court. Many burnt and thank offerings were offered, and the temple was once more purified. It is sad to think how soon it was to be again desecrated, as it had been in the former reign. Strange people! mixed of good and bad. And strange they were not all good as prosperity went with such, and trouble with the bad!

The heart of Hezekiah was so large he wished all his brethren to partake of his religious joys. He therefore resolved to hold the feast of the passover, in regal state; and sent messengers to invite all Judah, and the remnant of Israel left by the Assyrians, to partake with them this sacred feast.

Part only of the Israelites had been taken into captivity; but their fate subdued not the pride of the rest. Hezekiah sent to their chief men, the following letter:

“Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria. Be not like your brethren which trespassed against the God of their fathers, who, therefore, gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now be not stiff-necked, but enter into the sanctuary, and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may be turned away from you. For if ye turn again unto your God, the people who have taken your brethren captive will give them compassion and bring them back again.

“Your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face if ye will turn to him again.”

Precious epistle ! comforting invitation to the stray sheep, to enter again the fold of safety. But it was laughed to scorn, and its writer mocked by the doomed of Israel.

However, there were many who accepted the call, and came in numbers to Jerusalem, from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulon. The feast of the passover was held with a magnificence which

had not been seen since the days of Solomon. Priests and Levites were there, and the burnt-offerings were many. Those who had not been sufficiently sanctified, were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices by the Levites. For this occasion, king Hezekiah had given one thousand bullocks, and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave one thousand bullocks, and ten thousand sheep; both for offerings, and to feast the people. The Levites played on cymbals, psalteries, and harps, and the priests sounded the silver trumpets. When the burnt-offering began, they sang the songs of the Lord, accompanied by the instruments, and the sound thereof, doubtless, gladdened many a pious heart in the city.

Seven days was the feast of unleavened bread kept with much unction; and then another seven days' feast; so rejoiced were they, apparently, to return to their old ways. Hezekiah was always in the temple teaching, and exhorting, and comforting the Levites and people. He directed them how to arrange the courses of the services of the priests, how to offer the sacrifices, and keep the feasts; for years of idolatry had

almost effaced these things from their minds. Tithes were also instituted to feed the great number of priests and their families. Corn, oil, cattle, and other produce of the land were brought in cheerfully, by the people, and lay in heaps about the courts of the temple. That there might be no waste, Hezekiah appointed certain men to see it distributed faithfully. Cononiah, the Levite, and Shimei his brother, with ten men under them, delivered the portions to the priests; Kore, the son of a Levite, distributed the oblations; and Eden, with five others, attended to the share of those priests and Levites who dwelt in other cities, when not serving in the temple. What was left was laid up in the chambers of the temple.

All these good laws and regulations made Hezekiah the king; and, "in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and of the law, he did it with all his heart and prospered.

In the meantime, the lion that was to devour Judah, was hovering near. The Assyrians having carried away Israel captive, now turned their attention towards Jerusalem.

Isaiah, the great prophet, had, for some time, prophesied of their approach, to warn the people and keep them in the right path. To the invasion and overthrow of Sennacherib, Isaiah alludes, when he tells them of "a multitude of people which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and of the rushing of nations that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! But God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind." Many other prophecies had prepared the people for war.

In the fourteenth year of the reign of Hezekiah, news came that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was marching against Judah. Hezekiah held a council with his principal officers, and with their assent, he sent out men to stop all source of water in the vicinity of Jerusalem, so that if the army arrived before the city it could not remain long without water. Fountains were covered over, wells filled up, and brooks stopped with earth. And to supply the city, cisterns and wells were dug in the hard rock. The Assyrian came rushing down like a beast upon its prey; and many cities fell before him. Heze-

hiah became alarmed, and thought it best to buy the king off. Accordingly he collected all the treasure he could command ; even taking off the gold he had plated the pillars of the temple with. The walls were repaired ; towers built ; darts and shields distributed. Every where was the king seen encouraging his captains. " Be strong and courageous," he said to them. " Be not afraid of the king of Assyria, nor the multitude with him, for we are the strongest. With him is an arm of flesh alone ; but with us is the Lord our God to fight our battles." With such words, the people were much comforted ; and it was hoped the king of Assyria would accept the present and depart. But Sennacherib was not thus to be turned aside. Samaria had fallen into the hands of his nation, and he hoped to take Jerusalem also.

Where all had been rejoicing, now was alarm spread over the city. The scouts came in telling of the approach of the dreaded Assyrians. Soon they were seen, a great multitude, pouring in from every avenue and covering the ground in front of Jerusalem. The king was still besieging Lachish. His army now was commanded

by three fierce warriors, Tartan, Rabсарis, and Rabshakeh. Probably the want of water forced them to halt, for they encamped themselves, and then sent a messenger to the wall to demand speech of king Hezekiah. Three great officers, Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, were sent out to them.

Then stood forth Rabshakeh and said, "Thus saith the great king of Assyria to Hezekiah: 'On whom dost thou trust that thou rebellest against me? If thou trust in Pharoah king of Egypt, he is a broken reed and will pierce the hand that leans on him. If you say you trust in your God, Hezekiah has taken away his high places and set up an altar of his own for Judah and Jerusalem to worship before. You have no cavalry, and if we gave you two thousand horses ye have not men enough to ride them. How then will you fight us? Think not I am come up without the help of the Lord to destroy Jerusalem. The Lord said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it.' " The three officers of Hezekiah had listened thus far, and saw this bold language was having its effect upon the people on the walls, who heard it all; indeed they

also were almost convinced of their hopeless state. Eliakim said to Rabshakeh, "Speak, I pray thee, in the Syrian language, for we understand it, but speak not in Hebrew lest the people on the walls hear thee."

This acted only as a stimulus to Rabshakeh, and he approached nearer, crying out to the people in Hebrew: "Thus saith the great king of Assyria to you: 'Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you. Neither let Hezekiah make you hope the Lord will deliver you. Where are the gods of Samaria which was conquered by us? Come out to me; and I will take you to a land as good as this, where every man shall eat under his own vine, and fig tree, and drink the waters of his own cistern.'"

The people answered not. Eliakim and his fellow officers were completely disheartened by the words of Rabshakeh and by the sight of his numerous army, and went into king Hezekiah's presence with their garments torn in token of despair, and related all they had heard and seen.

Hezekiah knew there was no earthly hope to

rely on ; he ordered no more defences, but sending the officers to Isaiah for counsel, went into the Temple. There, tearing his dress, as was the custom in distress, he covered himself with sackcloth and prostrated himself before the Lord.

When his sorrowing heart was relieved from some of its load by prayer, he lifted his head and saw beside him the three officers who came to him with a comforting message from the prophet.

They had said to Isaiah, "Thus saith Hezekiah ; this is a day of trouble, of rebuke, and blasphemy. It may be the Lord will hear all these words of Rabshakeh against the living God, wherefore lift up thy prayer for us."

They now delivered Isaiah's answer ; "Thus saith the Lord : Be not afraid of the words of blasphemy which the servants of the king of Assyria have uttered. Behold I will send a pestilential blast upon him, he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by a sword there."

Hezekiah arose much strengthened and resolved to trust in the Lord his God.

The rumor, that Isaiah prophesied the Assy-

rian should soon hear, came to him while before Lachish; where he learnt that the king of Egypt was coming out in great force against him. Once in the possession of Jerusalem he feared nothing from Egypt, and sent the following letter to Hezekiah to frighten him into submission: "Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Thou hast heard how the kings of Assyria have destroyed other cities. Have the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and Eden heard their people? Where is the king of Samaria? of Hamath? of Arpad? where, the kings of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? If these are destroyed, hope not thou shalt be delivered."

Hezekiah received this insulting letter from the messengers; read it; and without a word to any one around him, he went out with a bursting heart, entered the temple, and spread the letter before his God.

"O Lord of Hosts!" he cried. "God of Judah! Thou that dwellest between the cherubim! Thou alone art God of all the kingdoms of the earth! Thou hast made heaven and

earth. Incline thine ear, and hear all the words of Sennacherib—open thine eyes and see his reproach to the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all these nations—now, therefore, O Lord, our God, save us from his hand, that all earth's nations may know that thou alone art the Lord."

The Lord heard his servant, and sent this message by his prophet Isaiah to comfort him again.

"Thus saith the Lord thy God: Thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and this is the word spoken against him: 'Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? Thou hast exalted thy voice against the Holy one of Israel, but the daughter of Zion laughs thee to scorn. I know thy rage against me; and because thy rage and tumult have come up into my ears, therefore will I put a hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.'"

The prophet then confronted the people, who, with the king, having heard former prophecies of the downfall of Jerusalem, feared it was coming now. Isaiah gave them this promise: "Ye

shall eat this year such as groweth by itself—the second year, that which springeth of the same, and in the third year ye shall sow, reap, and plant vineyards and eat the fruit thereof. As for the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow here, nor come before it with shields, nor cast up entrenchments here. By the way he came shall he return; I will defend this city for my servant David's sake."

The king and people of Jerusalem believed the words of the prophet, and reposed in peace that night. When daylight returned the watchers upon the towers beheld an awful sight—they called the soldiers—and they the citizens. The king Hezekiah, Isaiah, and all the great men came upon the wall to see, and lo! all the plain covered with the dead! The boasting captains—the noisy soldiers—the prancing chargers,—where were they? Behold, smitten by a pestilential blast; as the prophet had foretold, they in one night perished! The people of Jerusalem could have shouted for joy that their foemen were crushed, but compassion held them silent.

In great fear Sennacherib, when he had heard the terrible story, returned in haste, the way he had come. When in his own land, he perished by the sword, in the temple of his idol, Nisrock, smitten by the hands of his own sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer.

Thus, as the prophets Hosea and Isaiah had prophesied long before, was prostrated an army of one hundred and fourscore five thousand men—"not by the bow ; nor by the sword ; nor by the battle ; by no horses nor horsemen, but by the breath of the Lord."

And so Judah was delivered for the present.*

The nearer came the time of the fall of Judah, the more eagerly their Almighty Father pleaded with them. He did all that a parent could, short of force, to keep them from the edge of the abyss. Prophets of more power were sent. Isaiah and Jeremiah were called to admonish

* It is very great comfort to the devout believer in Holy Writ, that vouchers for the truth of these histories, have been lately discovered, engraven on the ruins of the Chaldean cities. There may be seen Samaria carried away captive—there Shalmanezzer, Sennacherib, and even Hezekiah portrayed.

and instruct the rebellious children. Great miracles were performed, to assure them of the presence of their living God. The awe produced by the destruction of Assyria's army was passing away, and another miracle was permitted, to gain their attention.

Hezekiah, the king, being very ill, sent to Isaiah to know if he should recover or no. The answer of the prophet was,—“Set thine house in order, for thou shalt surely die!” This was a dreadful shock to the king. He was not ready to die; and he turned his face to the wall when he heard the message, to conceal the grief it gave him, and wept sore. He prayed also to the Lord for life. Short-sighted man—how much better were it for him to have died then! But he prayed to the Lord and said:—

“I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and have done that which is good in thy sight; and spare me yet a little while.” The weeping king was aroused by the voice of Isaiah, who came with a message from the Lord. “Turn again and tell Hezekiah, the captain of my people,” was the word from on high, “I have heard thy prayer,

I have seen thy tears, and behold I will heal thee. On the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. I will add to thy days fifteen years. I will defend thee and this city for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake."

Isaiah ordered dried figs to be placed upon the inflamed part, where was a great boil.

Hezekiah was almost incredulous. "Give me a sign that I shall go unto the house of the Lord in three days." He said, "This sign shalt thou have, that the Lord will do the thing he hath spoken; the shadow on the dial of Ahaz shall go either back or forwards as thou wilt." "It is a light thing for a shadow to go forward;" said the king, "let it then go backwards ten degrees."

Isaiah, to the astonishment of all beholders, had power given him over the shadow on the dial; and it went backwards ten degrees!

Hezekiah arose, and in three days went and returned thanks unto the Lord.

The song which he composed upon his illness and recovery may be seen in the writings of Isaiah.

The kingdom of Judah was in a very flourishing condition during the reign of Hezekiah. Jerusalem and other cities were added to, and embellished; flocks and harvests covered the land; store-houses were filled with corn, oil and wine; and gold, silver, precious stones, and arms so increased, that the king built large treasure houses to hold them. This prosperity, as is often the case, was a snare to Hezekiah, and filled him with pride; an exhibition of this to the ambassadors of Babylon caused Isaiah to reprove him.

Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon, heard of the illness of Hezekiah, and sent messengers with letters of congratulation on his recovery. This was, probably, only a pretence, so that they might spy out the resources and defences of the king of Judah. Hezekiah was much flattered by this attention from the king of Babylon. As the ambassadors looked around upon the splendor of his palace and city, they lavished praises upon the king, to whose great qualities was the flourishing situation of his kingdom owing. Led on by their oily words, the king's heart "was lifted up," and he told them of the

treasures laid up in different places—showed them his armory—took them about the city walls; and with pride, told of his silver, and gold, and jewels, spices, and other precious things.

The ambassadors, doubtless, took careful note of all these things, to relate them to their master—to whose successors all were soon to appertain.

Isaiah, when the men had gone, sought Hezekiah, and reprovèd him for this injudicious exhibition of his treasure. He reprovèd him for his pride also, which had offended God:—"Hear the word of the Lord," he said: "Behold, the days come, that all the store that thy fathers have laid up in thy palace shall be carried to Babylon. Moreover, thy own sons and descendants shall they take away, and make them eunuchs in the palace of the kings of Babylon!" Hezekiah bowed his head, and said, "Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken. At least I thank him that peace shall reign during my days."

The land of Judah enjoyed twenty-nine years of peace and prosperity during the reign of Hezekiah; alas, only a lull before a storm!

He died at the age of fifty-four. His funeral ceremonies were such as befitted so great a man, and lasted many days. Amid a crowd of his sorrowing people, who came up in numbers from the country; through an air filled with the incense of sweet spices; and accompanied by the wail of the mourners, was the royal Hezekiah carried to the sepulchre of the kings of Judah. And well might they wail! Rapidly their days of peace were passing away! The noble and good were lessening in number! The line of kings was drawing to a close! And the "cup of trembling," was soon to be drunk to the dregs!

Manasseh, King of Judah.

WE mourn for the daughter of Zion, when we record the life of this bad man. How could, may be asked, a son of the good Hezekiah be so wicked? His mother, Hepzibah, was said to have been the daughter of Isaiah, and from her

could come no evil influence. It is true he was a boy of twelve when he was crowned a king ; but he had Isaiah as a counsellor and reprover, to have kept him from idolatry. Some think that Shebna, against whom Isaiah prophesied, was not a real convert from idolatry, and led the boy-king astray. He seemed to have inherited the nature of his grandfather Ahaz, rather than that of his pious father. To relate all he did, is only to string together all evil that fallen man could do. In sackcloth and ashes must the priests have left the temple, when they saw their king bowing down to altars erected in the courts to "all the host of heaven !" To sun, moon, planets ; to the abominations of the Canaanites ; to any and everything but the God who made him. His sons were forced to pass through fire to the god Moloch ; wizards and raisers of familiar spirits were seen in consultation with him ; and he set up graven images every where in Jerusalem. Every one that opposed him was slain, and Jerusalem was filled with blood. The Jews have a tradition, that he even committed the dreadful enormity of causing the prophet Isaiah to be sawn asunder.

His death, however, did not terrify the other prophets; and we find Joel, Nahum, and Habakkuk uttering denunciations against Manasseh and the wicked people who upheld him. "Because Manasseh hath done these abominable things," they said, "the Lord of Judah will bring such evil upon Jerusalem, that it will make the ears of the hearers tingle!"

Again they repeated the words of the Lord: "I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab! I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish—turning it upside down!" Forcible words, but soon fulfilled.

"Woe to Ariel! the city where David dwelt! Woe to the rebellious children!" The Lord's hand was to be stayed no longer. The prophets had spoken, and now were their words to be fulfilled. It was in no haste that God destroyed Jerusalem, and carried away its kings captive. Moses had forewarned them, every king had a prophet to deliver to him words from on high. They went not blindly to their doom; a living God abode in the shechinah of the temple, and revelation from Him was continually given them by

the prophets. As oft as they fell they were forgiven when repentant, for their tender father was reluctant to punish. He even deigned to argue and defend his measures to them. "Hear O heavens, and give ear, O earth!" he said, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."—"Come now and let us reason together!"—"O inhabitants of Jerusalem, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard."—"I have spread out my hands all day to a rebellious people, that have burned incense under every green tree."—"Shall I not visit for these things? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"—"I will recompense; even recompense into their bosom!"

In the twenty-second year of the reign of Manasseh, Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, bethought himself it was time to revenge upon Jerusalem the defeat of his father Sennacherib. The Assyrian set out in his own power and might, as he imagined; not knowing he was the scourge with which Judah was to be punished. Then was heard, "The rushing of nations, like the rushing of mighty waters!" Consternation sat upon every brow when the approach of the

Assyrians was known. King Manasseh betook him to his idols. Prostrate before the altars of Baal, he asked for his protection. His lying priests promised him another victory; and Baal would destroy this army as had befallen that of Sennachrib. Thus deluded, Manasseh left the city when the army approached; and soon learnt he had trusted to a false divinity. His small band was dispersed, and the king, after vainly seeking to hide himself in a thicket, was taken prisoner and carried to the camp. The city was taken—Judea laid waste; and Manasseh, the proud, the scoffing king, was carried in chains to Babylon!

A hapless captive, Manasseh had time for reflection. Of what avail had been Baal, and Ashtaroth, and all the hosts of heaven? They had been deaf to his call, and he now rejected them. Jehovah he saw was the true God, and to him he poured out his heart in humble penitence and prayer. He acknowledges his iniquities, in a prayer preserved in the Apocrypha; and declares his "sins are more in number than the sands of the sea." His prayer was heard, and Esarhaddon made sensible he could not re-

tain Judah ; so that Manasseh, after agreeing to pay tribute, and hold the kingdom only as in subjection to the king of Babylon, was suffered to return to Jerusalem.

Broken in spirit, and sad at heart, Manasseh was a different man from him who had gone out in the pride of his heart to see the fall of his enemies. Affliction had changed and purified him. He repaired the temple, took away his idol altars, and the smoke of peace-offerings and thank-offerings arose where once had ascended the incense of Baal. He also fortified the city ; repaired the wall of the valley ; built towers, and garrisoned many cities of Judah.

In the thirty-first year of his reign, died Esarhaddon. He was called Nabuchodonozor, in the history of Judith. Shebna, the secretary of state at this time, was removed from his place, as had been predicted by Isaiah ; and to Eliakim was given the office.

After a reign of fifty-five years, and in the sixty-seventh year of his age, king Manasseh closed his weary eyes in death. In spite of his repentance, he was not suffered to lie in the royal sepulchre, but was buried in his garden.

Amon, King of Judah.

SON of Manasseh and Meshullemeth, he walked worthy of such a father; of such as was Manasseh in the first years of his reign. Two years did the officers and servants of his household endure his idolatry, his tyranny, and bloody measures; and then a conspiracy was formed against him, and he was slain by his servants.

Such high-handed doings, however, were abhorrent to the people, who would not in silence behold the murder of even a bad king. The conspirators were attacked and slain in their turn; and Amon's body was interred in the garden beside his father. He had seen but twenty-four years.

Josiah, King of Judah.

AT the untimely death of his father, Josiah was taken from the care of his mother Jedidah; and, although but eight years of age, was made king. Their kings had been so good or so bad, that the people must have awaited tremblingly, to see if God or Baal were to be worshipped. It is a comfort to say he declared himself on the Lord's side. In his twelfth year was fulfilled a prophecy which had been delivered three hundred and fifty years before. The reader may remember the false Gods of Jeroboam, and the words of the prophet Jadon: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord! Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name: upon thee shall be burnt the bones of the priests that burn incense!"

Josiah experienced the greatest horror against idolatry, and when old enough to give directions,

commanded the universal destruction of idols and their altars, groves or temples. Then were the images, carved or molten, broken in pieces before him, and the dust sprinkled upon the graves of false priests. The bones of many priests in Jerusalem and all Judah were dug up and burnt upon their altars. As Judah and Israel were both belonging to the crown of Babylon, he had access to the cities of Israel; and upon the very altar which Jadon had addressed so long before, did Josiah burn all that remained of the priests that sacrificed there.

As in the days of Hezekiah, workmen were busy in the temple, repairing the damage of the last reign. Spirits of good and evil seemed always to hold battle over this celebrated building; and when one had ruined it, the other repaired it. Money was taken in at the door, and given to Hilkiah the high-priest, who, with it, paid the carpenters, builders, and masons.

Among some rubbish that was turned over, Hilkiah found a book which to his surprise he saw was one of the books of the law written by Moses, which had been lost in the idolatrous days of Manasseh, or perhaps Ahaz. "I have found

a book of the Law, read it," he said to Shaphan the scribe. He looked it over with interest; and being about to take his accounts to the king, carried it with him. After his accounts were given in he said; "I have here a book which Hilki'ah the priest found and gave to me." "Read it to me," said the young king. Shaphan read the words of the law and at the hearing, Josiah rent his clothes! And well he might, while he heard the terrible words of the Lord, and the denunciations of Moses against a people who had done such things as he knew his fathers and his countrymen had done. The wonder is that every king had not rent his clothes; and that every stone had not cried out against them. Each injunction had been disobeyed. The three things which were forbidden to a king; viz. to multiply horses, to have many wives, or to lay up hoards of gold and silver; those very things they possessed in abundance. Solomon had one thousand wives, and horses and treasure in great quantities; as had many of his successors.

And now must be looked for, judgment and execution!

Josiah sent in haste for the high priest and

some of his principal officers to consult with them ; for something must be done immediately to avert the evil. "Go to some prophet," said the young king, "inquire for me and Judah and the remnant of Israel, concerning the words of this book. For great wrath is to be poured out upon us from the Lord, because our fathers have not kept these laws."

Jeremiah was away, and the king's messenger sought out Huldah, to whom had been given the knowledge of the Lord's will. She was wife to Shallum, who kept the king's wardrobe, but dwelt in the college of the prophets. She heard all they had to say, and answered : "Tell the man who sent ye to me, all the destruction upon Judah foretold in that book, and all the curses uttered there shall truly fall ! Thus saith the Lord ; because the people have forsaken me, and burnt incense to other Gods, my wrath shall be poured out upon this land. But for thee, king of Judah, who wept and prayed before me, I will gather thee to thy fathers, before all this evil take place. Thou shalt not go into captivity, but be buried in the sepulchre of kings."

After this we see king Josiah again at work destroying idols, and reviving religion in the hearts of the people. The people were all called to the temple to hear read to them that book which they had so long neglected. Josiah stood in front of the royal seat ; and after reading the book entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord, for himself and people, that they would walk in his commandments all their days. After their religious ceremonies, the people sought out every vestige of former idols, among which were discovered some altars that Ahaz had erected on the roof of the temple. These and other things were broken to pieces, ground to powder, and thrown down into the brook Kedron that flowed beneath the city. Every place that had been considered sacred by the idolaters was made unclean, especially Tophet, in the valley of Hinnom, where fires to Moloch were kindled. The horses and chariots of the Sun, which carried their images in grand processions, were destroyed ; the horses killed and chariots burned.

Having thoroughly cleansed Jerusalem, the pious king again set out to perform the same

office more closely, over the whole kingdom. During this visit to Samaria he again went to Bethel, where he had before burned the bones of the false priests on the altar. The altar itself was now destroyed; (the cherubim, or golden calves, had been taken away by the Assyrian king.) While looking at the sepulchres in the rock, one especially attracted his attention.

“What are the names and titles written above that tomb?” he asked of the people who stood around. They answered, “It is the sepulchre of Jadon, a man of God, who came here from Judah, and foretold all these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel.” “Let no man move his bones,” said the king. Thus, the old prophet of Samaria, in whose tomb was Jadon laid, escaped the destruction that came upon the priests and false prophets of his land. He was the only one of that day who believed the words of Jadon would come true. The pious king was satisfied with the chastisement he had inflicted on the idolaters; and as he had slain the priests, hoped the altars would never be rebuilt. He then returned in triumph to Jerusalem.

Active in the service of the Lord, Josiah determined to keep the feast of the Passover in a sumptuous manner. The Passover of Hezekiah is said to have been kept better than any since the days of Solomon; but Josiah's exceeded his, for we are told, "there was not the like seen since the days of the judges."

Possibly this interesting and religious young king hoped to avert the doom he knew, by the prophets, was suspended over Jerusalem. But in vain. The hand of the Lord was stayed in his reign, it is true, and his tender spirit was saved the pain of all those woes; but, "for all that, His arm was stretched out still!"

A comfortable sight was it to the good king to see the people coming up in troops through every gate, and, passing along the streets, ascend to the courts of the Lord. King, and princes, and priests, and Levites, stood around the brazen altars; and the smoke of the sacrifice arose, accompanied by strains of solemn music. Seven days was kept the Passover and the feast: the last that was held by a king of the house of David!

But Josiah must leave his pious studies and

labors, and put on his armor; for Pharoah-Necho, king of Egypt, was approaching with a large army. He was on his way to attack the king of Assyria; and Josiah, being a tributary to the king, had in his oath of homage sworn to defend his land against all enemies. Ambassadors came to Necho, commanding his departure from Judea. But Necho was not to be turned away. He was on his way to revenge the destruction of Nineveh; for that great city of sixty miles in circuit had fallen, according to the prophecies of Jonah, Nahum, and Zephaniah. Assyria then appertained to the king of Babylon, who was also the liege lord of Jerusalem, for Judea was but a province of Assyria.

To the demands of Josiah, the Egyptian king replied, "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? Forbear to meddle with me; for my God is with me, and he will destroy thee." The fate of Jerusalem was fast coming upon her; and Josiah, as had been promised, must first be taken away. In the valley of Megiddo he arranged his men in battle before the Egyptian army. Gallantly he rode in his chariot to order the advance; himself in front,

a mark for the archers. An arrow sped; and he fell back on his seat. . "Have me away, for I am sore wounded," he said. His servants took him from his splendid war-chariot into one more commodious, and he was carried to Jerusalem, followed by his mourning servants. The death of Josiah was peaceful. He was buried, with great state, among crowds of mourners, and dirges of music, and smoke of burnt spices, in the sepulchres of his fathers, the kings of Judah.

The mourning for the last good king was great and universal in the city and over the land. The great prophet Jeremiah, who had foretold of woes to come, sat down and wept for Josiah, and for Jerusalem. "Behold, O Lord, I am in distress; my bowels are troubled, my heart is turned within me; my sighs are many and my heart is faint!"

Jehoahaz, or Shallum,

KING OF JUDAH.

JEHOAHAZ was the son of Josiah by his wife Hamutal, and, at the age of twenty-three, he succeeded his father. Eager to avenge his death, he sought the Egyptian army; but was defeated and taken prisoner. Necho marched to Jerusalem, placed Eliakim, the brother of Jehoahaz, upon the throne, and demanded of him a tribute of one hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. Thus, from being under Assyrian sway, the land of Judah belonged to Egypt; so low was she fallen! Jehoahaz reigned but three months; and was then sent into Egypt, where he ended his life in misery. A remarkable prophecy of Jeremiah was here fulfilled. "Weep ye not for the dead," he said; "but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country." In explana-

tion of this he went on, —“For thus saith the Lord, touching Shallum, the son of Josiah, He shall not return thither any more! He shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.”

Jehoiakim, King of Judah.

NECHO changed the name of Eliakim to Jehoiakim, as was the custom when a superior gave a place to another. He was an idolater, and a cruel, wicked man. He harried the land to pay the tribute to Necho, but denied himself no luxury. Jeremiah reprovèd him, and spoke of his houses, “ceiled with cedar, and painted vermilion,” and adds: “Shalt thou reign because thou closest thyself with cedar?” He also went into the temple and boldly warned the people that if they did not repent, the destruction hovering over the city should come in their day. He tells of the approach of Nebuchadnezzar under the name of “the Lion, who was come up

from his thicket against them." "Blow ye the trumpet!" he cried; "gird yourselves with sackcloth,—lament and howl,—behold the destroyer comes up as clouds—his chariots shall be as whirlwinds; his horses are swifter than eagles. O my soul, the sound of trumpets! Lo, I will bring a nation against you, saith the Lord, a mighty nation! prepare to war against her. The snorting of his horses is heard from Dan. I will make this city desolate, and all its precious things shall be taken away by the king of Babylon."

Jeremiah also foretold the manner of king Jehoiakim's death. He should be carried away from Jerusalem, and buried as an ass is buried. There should be no ceremonials—no funeral lamentations, as, "Ah, my brother! ah, my lord!"—as was usual at a king's death. Jeremiah was seized by the people, for uttering seditious speeches against the king and nation. Pashur, a man in office, put him in the stocks; but he was afterwards liberated by some of the chief men of the city. Urijah, another prophet, did not fare so well, for Jehoiakim was determined to have revenge for their words. He fled from

the king into Egypt; but was there seized, brought back and slain. The prophet Habakkuk also foretold the coming of the Chaldeans,—“a bitter and hasty nation! who should come up and possess all the land.” Zephaniah also cried, “The great day of the Lord is near! a day of wrath, of desolation, of darkness!”

In the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, the king of Babylon sent his son, the renowned Nebuchadnezzar, to regain Syria and Palestine from Necho, king of Egypt. At his approach, Jeremiah made one more effort to arouse the king and people from their sinful ways. The Rechabites had lately taken refuge in the city, from the Chaldeans, who were ravaging the country. In obedience to the commands of their ancestors, they had dwelt in tents, and abstained from wine upwards of three hundred years. He brought them into the temple, and, to give the people a lesson, set before them cups of wine, saying, “Drink ye wine.” They answered, “We will drink no wine, for Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our ancestor, forbade us to drink wine, or build houses, therefore we have abstained from drink. and dwelt in tents to this day.” “O

men of Judah," cried the prophet, "listen to these words: these men were commanded to drink no wine by their father Jonadab, and they have obeyed him to this day. But you have not hearkened to the words of your God, nor obeyed him; upon you shall come woe; but Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before the Lord forever."*

As this produced no very powerful effect, Jeremiah next wrote down, in a long scroll, all the prophecies he had uttered against this and other nations since the thirteenth year of Josiah, all of which had been from the Lord. These he told Baruch to write off, and read to the people in the temple. "It may be," he said, "that the people will repent and supplicate the Lord, and their iniquities may be forgiven." Alas, "the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond," and nothing was of avail now.

It was the day of a public fast, still kept by some of the people, that Baruch read the roll.

* When Wolff, the Eastern traveller, told Edward Irving that he had discovered the Rechabites, he fell upon his knees and praised God that his word was proved to be true.

No one seems to have been disturbed by these threatenings, except one Michaiah, a person of power. He thought these things should be known to the council of state, who had not cared to attend the fast. He repaired to the office of the scribe, or secretary of state, and found an assemblage of principal officers and princes; to whom he related all he had heard of the denunciations from the Lord against them, written down by the prophet Jeremiah. The princes sent for Baruch, who came with the important roll in his hand. "Sit down and read it to us," they said. Baruch read the terrible words, and told of the near destruction of the city, and scattering of its people; and, while he read, great fear took possession of them. They asked Baruch about the prophecies. "He pronounced all these words to me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in this book," was his reply. It was thought proper that the king should know of these coming woes, that he might guard against them; but, as he had once been angry at such prophecies, they cautioned Baruch to conceal himself and Jeremiah awhile. The scroll was left with the scribe, and a depu-

tation of the princes waited upon the king, and related the history of the fatal roll. Jehoiakim ordered the scroll to be read to him. He was seated in a winter room, beside a fire, and the princes stood around, while Jehudi read it aloud. The king stretched out his hand for the roll, and, to the consternation of all, cut it into pieces with a knife, and burnt it in the fire! At this daring deed of the hardened king; this contemptuous treatment of the words of God through his inspired servant; Jeremiah remarks, "they were not afraid, nor rent their garments!" Three of them did step forward, as if to save the roll, but the king sternly commanded them to forbear. He then sent to take Jeremiah and Baruch, but they had escaped. The Jews have ever kept an annual fast for the burning of the roll.

In the meanwhile, Nebuchadnezzar had fought and conquered the Egyptian king; had retaken his Syrian and Judean cities, and then was marching upon Jerusalem. After the siege of a month the city was taken, and the king made prisoner and bound with chains. When about to be sent to Babylon, Jehoiakim begged so humbly to remain, and promised such rich tribute and fealty to

Nebuchadnezzar, that the king of Babylon took off his chains and allowed him to retain his throne, but as viceroy alone. Many nobles, however, were sent to Babylon; and the sacred vessels of the temple sent to the temple of Bel, at Babylon. Among the captives taken away now, was one of the most interesting characters mentioned in the Bible. This was Daniel, "beloved of the Lord." Nebuchadnezzar ordered Ashpenaz, the master of the eunuchs, to select a number of children of the royal and noble families, of the finest countenances, and quickest parts, to be brought up in the court of Babylon. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. When in Babylon, their names were changed to Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Although captives, and away from their holy city and temple, yet these young men held fast their faith even in the fiery furnace, and in the den of beasts. In all, there were three thousand and twenty-three carried captive.

This was the commencement of the seventy years' captivity predicted by Jeremiah.

Jehoiakim's reverses did not improve his

character. He led the same wicked life as before. At the end of three years, he entered into a confederacy with the king of Egypt, to rebel against the king of Babylon. Having turned a deaf ear to Jeremiah, the only one who could have warned him of the ruin he was bringing upon himself, he entered blindly into destruction. Nebuchadnezzar, being engaged with the Medes, sent his tributary troops to reduce Jehoiakim again to obedience. The lieutenants of the Babylonish king came up to Jerusalem, with bands of Ammonites, Moabites, Syrians, and Arabians, all willing to give their help to the destruction of their formidable enemy. Three years Jehoiakim kept them at bay, while they overran the country; but, at last, they all joined and besieged him in Jerusalem. Jehoiakim made a sally against them; but was taken, slain, and thrown in a ditch near the gate of Jerusalem, where he died, according to the prediction of Jeremiah, who said that he should be cast forth from the gates, and buried with the burial of an ass. He had reigned eleven years.

Jehoiachin, or Jeroniah,

KING OF JUDAH.

NOTHING could arouse the doomed race more ; and the conduct of this king was as bad as his father Jehoiakim, although Jeremiah was sent to him with these terrible words: "As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence. I will give thee unto the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and will cast out thee and the mother that bare thee unto another country, and there shall ye die !"

His reign lasted but three months. Nebuchadnezzar came up with his royal troops, and Jehoiachin was forced to surrender. He came out of the city, with his mother, his children, wives, nobles, and servants, and submitted to the Babylonian. He was sent to Babylon, laden



DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM BY THE ASSYRIANS.—Page 389.

with chains of brass, and lingered in prison thirty-seven years. At the death of Nebuchadnezzar, his son Evil-merodach took pity upon the captive king, released him, and gave him a seat at his table and a suitable allowance. Two years after, the king of Babylon was slain by conspirators, and it is supposed Jechoiachin perished with him.



Zedekiah, or Mattaniah,

LAST KING OF JUDAH.

THE king of Babylon made Mattaniah, the brother of king Josiah, king of Jerusalem; and, according to the custom at that time, his name was changed to Zedekiah. He was twenty-one years of age.

Jerusalem was thoroughly sacked. All the treasure of the royal house, and the city, and temple, and many of the rare and beautiful vessels made by Solomon for religious worship,

were sent away.. Besides king Jehoiachin, his mother and officers, ten thousand men were sent away captives. The warriors were sent to the army, and the craftsmen and artificers to Babylon. Among those taken to Chaldea was the prophet Ezekiel. He had told the people of the "sword" that was to slay them; and that they should be an instruction and astonishment to all nations! Thus, as Isaiah had prophesied so long before, the "stay and staff" was taken from Jerusalem; "the mighty man, the man of war, the prophet, the prudent, the ancient, the captain, the honorable man, the counsellor, the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator." "For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen." These remarkable prophecies were delivered two hundred years before their fulfillment. The heart of Zedekiah was not softened by these things. His life was one round of evil and idolatry. His old enemies, the Moabites and others, sent ambassadors to him, and asked him to join with them in a league against Babylon. But Zedekiah had so lately seen the power of that nation that he refused. Jeremiah sent by the ambassadors a yoke to each king, with a message

that they should be subjects of the king of Babylon, and even to his son's son.

Among the captives in Chaldea were many cunning men, who set themselves up for prophets, and so elevated the people by false hopes of return to Judah, that they were very uneasy, and plotted how to revolt. Jeremiah knew these hopes were vain; and, to quiet the people and reprove the false prophets, he wrote to them the following epistle :

“Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel : Unto all that I have caused to be carried away captive to Babylon. Build ye houses, and plant gardens; take wives, and raise up families, that your numbers may be increased. Seek to live in peace and quietness, and do not disturb the peace of the city where you dwell; for your captivity shall last seventy years, because ye have neglected to give the land her sabbaths for all this time. Listen not therefore to false prophets and diviners, that say you shall return, for they divine falsehoods. Thus saith the Lord of Ahab, and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who have prophesied a lie in my name, and have committed adultery with their neighbor's wife :

Behold I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, and he shall slay them. Ye are much happier than your brethren here, who have to suffer by the judgment of the Lord. I will send upon them the sword and famine and pestilence; and they shall be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, an astonishment, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations whither I have driven them. If ye call upon me, and search for me, with all your heart, I will turn away your captivity, and gather you from all the nations whither I have driven you; and will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive, saith the Lord."

This letter was read to the people at Babylon, and caused great displeasure, of course, to the false prophets. One of them, Semaiah, sent back a letter to Zephaniah, and all other priests at Jerusalem, complaining of Jeremiah for grieving the people with news of so long a captivity. This letter was read to Jeremiah, who contented himself with denouncing severe punishment against Semaiah. This punishment no doubt fell upon him, as it did on Ahab and Zedekiah.

They rendered the people so unsettled and troublesome by their prophecies, that Nebuchadnezzar caused them to be roasted alive. The Jews have a tradition that these two bad men were the same that entered the garden of Sennah.

In the seventh year of his reign, Zedekiah, hoping to free his country, resolved to accept the offers of Pharaoh-Hophia, king of Egypt, and join him in a rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. To save him from this ruinous course, Jeremiah was sent by the Lord to tell Zedekiah that his efforts were in vain; and that the king of Babylon should certainly come: "Behold, saith the Lord, I will give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. And thou shalt not escape; thou shalt go to Babylon, and thine eyes shall see the king, and thou shalt speak to him face to face."

The king was also told that his death would be peaceful, with the odors and mournings as usual.

Zedekiah was angry at these prophecies, and caused Jeremiah to be shut up in prison.

Ezekiel was then commissioned to prophesy.

He marked out the siege of Jerusalem on a tile; represented the wall which was afterwards thrown up, also the camp and the battering ram. He also predicted a famine; and told of the manner of Zedekiah's flight. "Dig through the wall."—"Cover thy face."—"Carry forth the stuff." Ezekiel then delivered this remarkable prophecy of the king:—"I will bring him to Babylon, yet shall he not see it, though he die there."

Zedekiah would not listen to either prophet, for they contradicted each other, he said. Jeremiah told him he should see the king of Babylon, and be carried thither. Ezekiel said he should not see Babylon. Jeremiah said he should die in peace and be buried with honor; while Ezekiel said he should die in Babylon. Too late the king found that both were true.

Events hasten on. The king of Babylon set out to chastise his rebellious servants, the Syrians, Ammonites, and the Jews. Not being decided which to attack first, he, according to the custom of his diviners, wrote the names of the cities on several arrows, put them together, and the first drawn out was Judah. He then be-



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sieged and took many cities of the Jews. Zedekiah and his people were much frightened, and he sent for Jeremiah to prophesy something to raise their hopes. Faithful to the truth, Jeremiah said, "Thus saith the Lord: I will fight against the inhabitants of this city, and I will give up Zedekiah and his people to the Chaldeans; to the sword, and pestilence, and famine." The king was again incensed, and imprisoned Jeremiah. Still he delivered the denunciations of the Lord; and prayed to him in favor of his people. "Behold the mounts," he said; "they are come to the city to take it!"

The Chaldeans took every city that opposed them, and then encamped before Jerusalem. The Egyptians marched thither also to assist their allies; but were met by Nebuchadnezzar, who had sent away eight hundred and thirty-two captives to Babylon, and now attacked the Egyptians and defeated them. Zedekiah was elated at the departure of the enemy, and sent to Jeremiah to ask what he had to say now. Still he said, "The Chaldeans shall come again—shall take this city—and burn it with fire! And all thy wives and children shall they take

captive." Being liberated, Jeremiah set out to visit his friends in Anathoth, and to avoid the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem. But while passing out of the gate he was seized and accused of deserting to the Chaldeans. In vain were all his protestations, and Jeremiah was imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the scribe. The Chaldeans returned and commenced the siege anew; threw up new towers, and put in force their battering-rams. Again was Zedekiah overcome with fear, and sent in haste for Jeremiah. "Is there any word from the Lord?" he asked. "There is," said the prophet. "Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon." Zedekiah was oppressed with grief, which emboldened Jeremiah to ask for better quarters. The king sent him to a more comfortable place, and had him supplied with bread. The horrors of a siege now began. The towers approached the walls, and the soldiers on them were continually slain; the dreadful noise of the battering-ram was heard, and the people crowded before the prison of Jeremiah, as if he could ask for the help of God, and receive it. But he flinched not for king, prince, nor people, and told them,

"The city should suffer from famine and pestilence, and their only hope was to surrender." These words made the princes angry, and they repaired to the king, saying, "We beseech thee, let this man be put to death; for he weakens the hands of the soldiers and people, by speaking such words to them." Zedekiah replied, "He is in your hands, do as you please." Thus delivered up to his enemies by his weak sovereign, Jeremiah was thrown down into a dungeon half filled with mire, and left to perish. He had, however, a friend, an Ethiopian, one of the king's eunuchs. He represented to the king the heinousness of such conduct to a prophet; and Zedekiah gave him permission to save his life. Jeremiah was drawn up, and placed again in his former prison, where he remained until the Chaldeans liberated him.

The siege continued, and the citizens stoutly defended themselves. But an insidious enemy was in the city, against whom they could do nothing. Provisions became scarce, and, after a time, many of the people perished under the dread pangs of famine. To this was added a pestilence which carried off hundreds. For a

year the wretched people held out against hunger, thirst, and illness, that raged within, and a fierce enemy without. In the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, the crushing battering-ram made a breach in the north wall of Jerusalem, and the generals of Nebuchadnezzar entered and took possession of the city. In terror, fled king Zedekiah, through a hole made by enlarging the mouth of a ditch or drain, which ran near the south gate. His wives, children, servants, and a large body of soldiers, followed him, and the whole took their way through the valley towards Jericho. He could not shun his doom. He might, perhaps, have averted or softened it, if he had submitted to his God ; but his haughty heart was sufficient unto itself, and he fell.

The Chaldean troops pursued, overtook, and captured the king. He, with his wives, children, servants, and household officers, were sent to Nebuchadnezzar, who was at Riblah ; but his soldiers escaped. The king of Babylon, like his predecessors, was unwilling to destroy Jerusalem ; but he found its kings loved their freedom too well to remain his faithful tributaries. He therefore gave the command to dismantle the

city. He was very wroth with Zedekiah for breaking his oath of fealty, and bringing the Egyptians upon the land; his sentence was therefore severe. The wretched king saw his beloved sons slain before his face, and his intimate friends, the princes of Judah! Refinement of cruelty! The eyes of Zedekiah were then put out, he was bound with chains of brass, and sent captive to Babylon. Thus were the apparently contradictory prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel fulfilled: he went to Babylon, but he saw it not! The two other prophecies,—that he should die in peace and be buried with honor; and that he should end his days a captive in Babylon,—were also true. He was carried to Babylon, and imprisoned until his death, when his people were permitted to give him a magnificent funeral. With the king were carried captive all the principal men and priests, leaving only a few of the poorer sort.

In the meanwhile, the destruction of Jerusalem was going on. The walls were first laid low,—next the royal palace: the houses of the nobles, and every tower and strong-hold, were crumbled to the dust. The magnificent temple

of Solomon was filled with refugees; but they were slain, and the temple first robbed of its treasure, and then destroyed. The words of Isaiah were now seen to be true, "Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste!" The treasure in gold and brass, from the temple alone, was immense. The gold plating was stripped off; gold vessels, and brazen pillars, and basins, and altars made in the reign of Solomon, four hundred and sixteen years before, were broken up and sent to Babylon, where the gold was melted to make idols. The divine glory of the Shechinah departed, never to return! The holy fire upon the altar was put out, and never relighted again! The golden cherubim, the tables of rare wood, the ark with the pot of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tables of the law, were all destroyed, or put in idol temples. Antiquities of priceless value! The Ark with its contents had then been in existence thirty-nine hundred years.

There is a hope that the ark may be found; for the Jews have a tradition that it was con-

cealed in those mysterious vaults, which are said to have been formed in the foundation of the temple, and which must still remain there. Travellers are said to have penetrated to the mouth of one of them, but the "abomination of desolation," which is built upon the site of the temple, is guarded so sacredly, that their destruction alone could reveal the truth.

And now the word of God, given by his prophets, was fulfilled! "Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation!" "Remove the diadem! Take off the crown!" Fire and sword have done their worst; its people are scattered or dead, and Jeremiah, lamenting over its ruins, exclaims, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people; how is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, a princess among the provinces; how is she become tributary? The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to her solemn feasts. Her gates are sunk in the ground,—her king and her princes are among the gentiles,—her elders sit

upon the ground. The punishment of thy iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion. For these things I weep, mine eye runneth down with water, because my children are desolate!"

Is this the end of the city of David, and the house of God? No! We have the sure word of promise, that Zion shall awake and return. A remnant returned, but all will again come up from captivity, when they have repented of their sins. "I will say to the north, give up; and to the south, keep not back. Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." And a call will be heard, "Awake, awake; stand up, O Jerusalem! which has drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury! Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again!" Then shall cease the voice of wailing now heard upon stated days, under the temple walls, by the wretched remnant of Judah and Israel, that are suffered to dwell in the city of their ancestors. Restored and repentant, the daughter of Zion shall smile again!



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